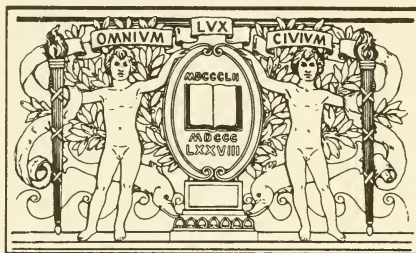


Kingsford Quarter



RALPH HENRY BARBOUR



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By

Ralph Henry Barbour

Author of "The Crimson Sweater," "Tom, Dick, and Harriet,"
"Harry's Island," "Captain Chub," etc.

With Illustrations

By C. M. Relyea



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THE GREAT GAME.



TO
CARLETON NOYES
AS A TOKEN OF A
LONG FRIENDSHIP

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KINGSFORD, QUARTER

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CHAPTER I

EVAN HAPPENS IN

EVAN climbed the second flight of stairs, pulling his bag heavily behind him. For the last quarter of an hour he had been wishing that he had packed fewer books in it. At the station he had stopped to telegraph to his family announcing his safe arrival at Riverport, and so had lost the stage to school and had walked a full mile and a quarter. That is ordinarily no task for a well-set-up, strong lad of fifteen years, but when he is burdened with a large suit-case containing no end of books and boots and other stuff that ought to be in his trunk, and when the last half-mile is steadily uphill, it makes a difference. Evan was aware of the difference.

At the top of the final flight he set the bag

down and looked speculatively up and down the long, dim hallway. In front of him the closed door was numbered 24. At the office they had assigned him to 36 Holden. He had found the dormitory without difficulty, and now he had only to find 36. He wondered which way the numbers ran. That he was n't alone up here on the second floor was evident, for from behind closed doors and opened doors came the sound of much talking and laughter. While he stood there resting his tired arms, the portal of number 24 was flung open, and a tall youth in his shirt-sleeves confronted him. Behind the tall youth the room seemed at first glance to be simply seething with boys.

"Where is room 36, please?" asked Evan.

"Thirty-six?" The other considered the question with a broad smile. Then, instead of answering, he turned toward the room. "Say, fellows, here's a new one. Come and have a look. It'll do you no end of good."

In a second the doorway was filled with curious, grinning faces. Perhaps if Evan had n't been so tired he would have accepted the situation with better humor. As it was, he lifted his suit-case and turned away with a scowl.

"He doesn't like us!" wailed a voice.
"Ah, woe is me!"

"Where's he going?" asked another.
"Tarry, stranger, and —"

"He wants 36," said the tall youth.
"Who's in 36, somebody?"

"Nobody. Tupper had it last year; he and Andy Long."

"Say, kid, 36 is at the other end of the hall. But don't scowl at me like that, or I'll come out there and give you something to be peevish about."

Evan, obeying directions, turned and passed the group again in search of his room. He paid no heed to the challenge, for he was much too tired to get really angry. But he didn't take the scowl from his face, and the boy in the doorway saw it.

"Look pleasant, kid," he continued threateningly. He pushed his way through the laughing group and overtook Evan a little way down the hall. He was a big chap, good-looking in a heavy way, and seemed to be about seventeen years old. He placed a hand on Evan's shoulder and with a quick jerk swung him around with his back to the wall. Evan dropped his bag and raised his hands defensively.

“ What do you want? ” he demanded.

“ Did n’t I tell you to look pleasant? ” growled his tormentor, with an ugly grin on his features. “ Did n’t I? Well, do it! ”

“ You let me alone,” said Evan, the blood rushing into his cheeks.

“ Of course I ’ll let you alone, kid; when I get ready. Off with that scowl; do you hear? ”

“ You take it off! ” answered Evan, pushing the other away from him.

“ The new one ’s game! ” cried the tall youth. The others were flocking about them. Evan’s arms were beaten down swiftly and pinned to his sides in a strong grip, and a hand was passed roughly over his face, hurting so that, in spite of him, the tears rushed to his eyes. With an effort he shook off the other’s grip, stumbled over the suit-case, and staggered against a door. The next moment he was falling backward, the door giving way behind him. He landed on his back, his head striking the thinly carpeted floor with a force that made him see all sorts and sizes of blue stars and for an instant quite dazed him. Then he heard a drawling voice somewhere at the back of the room say:



“ ‘ LOOK PLEASANT, KID,’ HE CONTINUED THREATENINGLY.”

“ Welcome to my humble domicile.”

When he opened his eyes, his assailant was standing over him, and the group in the doorway held several anxious faces.

“ Are n’t hurt, are you? ” asked the cause of his mishap. “ Give me your hand.”

Evan obeyed and was pulled to his feet. He had quite forgotten his anger. “ I ’m all right,” he said dully, feeling of the back of his head.

“ That ’s right,” said the other, with a note of relief in his voice. “ I did n’t mean to hurt you. It was the door, you see.”

“ Up to your tricks again, eh, Hop? ”

It was the drawling voice Evan had heard a moment before, and its owner, a tall, somewhat lanky boy, came into view around the table. “ You ’ve got the keenest sense of humor, Hop, I ever met with. Why did n’t you drop him out of the window? ”

“ Oh, you dry up, Rob. I did n’t do anything to him. The door was unlatched, and he fell against it. It ’s none of your business, anyway.”

“ It ’s my business if I like to make it mine,” was the reply. He pulled up a chair and waved Evan toward it. “ Sit down and get your

breath," he directed. Evan obeyed, his gaze studying the youth called Hop.

"Now, then," said his new acquaintance quietly, "all out, if you please, gentlemen. I'll look after the patient. Leave him to me."

The group at the doorway melted away, and Hop followed. As he passed out, he turned and found Evan's gaze still on him.

"Well, you'll know me, I guess, when you see me again," he said crossly.

"I think I shall," answered Evan, calmly.

His host chuckled as he closed and bolted the door. Then he came back and sank into a chair opposite Evan, his legs sprawling across the floor.

"Well?" he asked kindly. "Any damage?"

"No, I guess not. My head aches and I'm sort of dizzy, but I'll be all right in a minute."

"I guess so. Just come, did you?"

"Yes; I was looking for my room when that chap —"

"Frank Hopkins."

"When he got mad because I scowled at him. We tussled, and I fell through the door."

"That was partly my fault. I'm sorry. You see, I'd been fixing the latch so I could

open it from bed, and I had n't quite finished when you bumped against the door. What 's your name? "

" Kingsford."

" Mine 's Langton; first name Robert; commonly called Rob; sometimes Lanky. Glad to meet you. Nice of you to drop in so casually."

Evan laughed.

" That 's better. Wait a minute." Rob got up and went to the wash-stand and dipped a towel in the pitcher. " Put that around your head," he directed. " It 's good for aches. Too wet, is it? Let me have it." He wrung some of the water out on the carpet and handed it back. " There you are. What room have they put you into? "

" Thirty-six."

" No good," said Rob, with a shake of his head. " You 'll freeze to death there. The Gobbler had it two years ago, and he did something to the steam-pipes so that the heat does n't get around any more. He vows he did n't, but I know the Gobbler."

" Can't it be fixed? "

" It never has been. They 've tried dozens of times. I have an idea what the trouble is,

and I told Mac — he 's house faculty here — that I could fix it if he 'd let me. But he never would."

" Well, I suppose I 'll have to live there just the same," said Evan, with a smile.

" Oh, I don't know. Where do you come from, Kingsford? "

" Elmira, New York."

" Really? My home 's in Albany. We 're natives of the same old State, aren't we? I guess we 'll get on all right. What class are you in? "

" Junior."

" So am I. That 's another bond of sympathy. I call this great luck! I hate to live alone. Sandy Whipple was with me last year, but he had typhoid in the summer and is n't coming back for a while. And now you happen in. Well, make yourself at home, Kingsford. It is n't a bad room, you see. That 's your side over there."

" But — this is n't 36, is it? " asked Evan.

" Not a bit of it. This is 32. I told you, did n't I, that 36 was no good? "

" But they 've put me there! Won't I have to go? "

" Of course not. I 'll settle it with the Doc-

tor. You 're inclined to colds, you know, and 36 wouldn't do for a minute. You leave it all to me. Any consumption in your family? "

" No. Why in the world do you ask that? "

" Well, if you had a consumptive uncle or cousin or something, it would help. I 'd tell the Doctor that your lungs were weak and that your Uncle Tom had consumption. But never mind. I 'll fix it."

" But — but do you really want me here? "

" Of course I do! Didn't I just say that I was down in the mouth because I didn't have a room-mate? Besides, I like your looks. And we 're both New Yorkers, and we 're both juniors. That ought to settle it, I should say."

" Well, it 's awfully good of you," said Evan, gratefully, " and I 'll be glad to room with you if they 'll let me. Only — "

" Only nothing! " said the other, decisively. " Fate threw you in here, and here you stay! "

CHAPTER II

THE BOY IN 32

ROB LANGTON was sixteen years of age, tall, a trifle weedy, like a boy who has grown too fast. He always seemed to be in difficulties with his arms and legs. Even his hair, which was dark and long, looked as though in a constant state of mutiny. There was one obstreperous lock which stood straight into the air on the top of his head, and several thick ones which were forever falling over his eyes and having to be brushed impatiently back. Comb and brush and water had little effect on Rob's hair.

His face was thin, with a broad, good-humored mouth, a firm chin, a straight nose, and two very kindly brown eyes. Evan liked him from the very first moment of their meeting. And doubtless Evan's sentiment was returned, otherwise Rob Langton would never have adopted him on such slight acquaintance, for

Rob, while generally liked throughout Riverport School, had few close friends and was considered hard to know.

The two boys examined each other quite frankly while they talked, just as boys do. What Rob saw was a well-built, athletic-looking youngster, fairly tall, with a good breadth of shoulder, alert and capable. There was a pair of steady blue eyes, a good nose, a chin that, in spite of having a dimple in the middle of it, looked determined, and a well-formed mouth which, like Rob Langton's, hinted of good humor. Evan's hair, however, was n't in the least like that of the older boy. In the first place, it was several shades lighter, and, in the second place, it was very well-behaved hair and stayed where it was put. Even the folded towel which he wore around his forehead had n't rumbled it.

"I ought to be in the middle class," Rob was explaining cheerfully. "When I came last year I expected to go into the junior, but Latin and Greek had me floored, and so, rather than make any unnecessary trouble for the faculty, I dropped into the preparatory. The fact is, Kingsford, I hate those old dead languages. Mathematics and I get on all right, and I don't

mind English, but Greek — well, I 'd like to punch Xenophon's head! Dad has it all cut out that I 'm to be a lawyer; he 's one himself, and a good one; but if I can get my way I 'm going to Cornell and go in for engineering. They call it structural engineering nowadays. That 's what I want to do, and there 's going to be a heap of trouble in our cozy little home if I don't get my way. What are you going to be? "

" I don't know — yet. I have n't thought much about it. My father 's a doctor, but I don't go in for that. I don't like sick folks; besides, there does n't seem to be much money in doctoring."

" Well, some of them seem to do pretty well," replied Rob, thoughtfully. " You might be a specialist and charge big fees. When Dad was ill two years ago we had a fellow up from New York in consultation. He and our doctor got together in the library for about ten minutes, and then he ate a big lunch and went home again. And it cost Dad five hundred dollars."

" That sounds all right," laughed Evan, " but I guess he had to do a lot of hard work before he ever got where he could charge five hundred dollars."

“ I suppose so. Do you ever invent? ”

“ Invent? What do you mean? ”

“ Invent things, like — like this.” Rob began a search through his pockets and finally pulled out a piece of brass, queerly shaped and notched, some three inches long.

“ What is it? ” asked Evan, as he took it and examined it curiously.

“ Just a — a combined tool, as you might say. I call it ‘ Langton’s Pocket Friend.’ Here ’s a screw-driver; see? And these notches are for breaking glass after it ’s cut. Up here there ’s a little steel wheel for cutting it, only I have n’t put that in. This is just a model, you know; I filed it out coming down on the train this morning. Then this slot is for sharpening pencils. There ’s a nail-file here, you see, only it is n’t filed, of course, because this is just brass. The spur is for cutting wire, or you can open a can with it if the tin is n’t very thick. Then this end here is to open envelops or cut pages with. There are two or three other things I ’ve thought of since that I can work in. Of course, if I ever made them, they ’d be of steel.”

“ That ’s fine,” said Evan. “ Did you think of it yourself? ”

“ Yes. I ’m always tinkering with some silly thing. That ’s the reason I don’t cut more of a figure with studies, I guess. Dad has patented two or three things for me, but I ’ve never been able to sell the patents.”

“ What are they? ” asked Evan, interestedly.

“ One ’s a snow-shovel made of wire netting like an ash-sifter. It only weighs twelve ounces and works finely. But no one would buy it. Another ’s a top with a slot just above the peg so you can put in a cap. Then when you throw it on the ground the peg comes up against the cap and explodes it.”

“ I should think that would be a dandy idea.”

“ Well, one man I tried to sell it to said if I could induce boys to spin tops around the Fourth of July he would buy my patent. You see, folks are so fussy now that you can’t buy paper caps except around the Fourth.”

“ I see. And what was the other thing? ”

“ That ’s the best of the lot,” said Rob, thrusting his hands into his pockets and sprawling his legs across the floor. “ I ’ve still got hopes of that. It ’s a patent match-safe to carry in your pocket. It looks just like

any other match-safe, but when you want a match you don't have to open it. You just push a little button, and a match pops out. Maybe I'll sell that yet. It's a mighty good idea, and there ought to be money in it."

"I should think you'd want to be an inventor instead of an engineer."

"There is n't much money in inventions, except for the patent lawyer; at least, that's what Dad says. Besides, engineering is a good deal like inventing. You have problems to solve, and there's always the chance of discovering a better way to do a thing. Dad says I've got a good deal of ingenuity, but that if I don't look out I'll never be anything but a potterer."

"A potterer? That's a funny name for you."

"Yes; he means a chap who just potters around doing a lot of little things that don't amount to anything. How's your head?"

"Much better. Do you think I'd better unpack my bag, or shall I wait until I'm sure about my room?"

"Go ahead and unpack. It'll be all right. Even if it is n't, 36 is just across the hall, and I'll help you carry things over. Trunks ought

to be up pretty soon, too. Say, do you go in for anything? ”

“ In for anything? ” repeated Evan, doubtfully.

“ Yes, foot-ball or hockey or track or rowing or — ”

“ I play foot-ball,” answered Evan. “ I want to try for the team here. Do you think I ’d stand any show, Langton? ”

“ Do I think — ” Rob stopped and chuckled. Evan flushed.

“ What ’s the matter? I ’ve played a good deal, and I dare say I know as much about it as — as lots of fellows here.”

“ As I do, you were going to say,” laughed Rob. “ I was n’t laughing at you, Kingsford. I dare say you can play better than a good many fellows on the team, but I don’t think your chances are very bright, and if you ask me why, — well, I can only say because the Riverport Eleven is what Dad would call a close corporation.”

“ What ’s that? ”

“ I ’ll try again,” said Rob, thrusting his hands in his pockets and falling into the queer drawl which he affected at times. “ The team is like a very select club, Kingsford. If you

know enough about foot-ball to kick the ball instead of biting it, and stand pretty well with — er — the manager or captain or some of the members, you can make it. Of course they 're always glad to have you go out and ' try for the team ' ; it looks well and sort of adds interest. And of course you 're supposed to subscribe toward expenses. And when the team goes away anywhere to play, they allow you to go along and yell yourself hoarse. But don't think for a moment, my friend, that you can make the team here by just playing good ball."

" That does n't sound very encouraging," said Evan, with a frown. " Especially as I don't know a single fellow here — except you."

" Well, at least you 've got a speaking acquaintance with one other," said Rob, dryly, the smile still lurking about the corners of his mouth.

" Who do you mean? The fellow who — "

" Yes, Frank Hopkins. He 's ' the fellow who ' — "

" Well, that does n't help any, I guess."

" No; no, I don't honestly think it does," answered Rob, with a queer look. " Because, you see, Kingsford, Hop is the captain."

“ Foot-ball captain? ” cried Evan, in dismay. Rob nodded with a wicked grin.

“ Well, if that is n’t luck! ” exclaimed Evan, subsiding on the foot of his bed to consider the fact. “ I guess that settles my chances all right, Langton.” Rob nodded.

“ As I don’t want to nourish idle hopes, Kingsford, I’ll just remark that I think you ’ve got the answer.”

“ Shucks! ” said Evan, disgustedly. “ And I thought I was going to have a great time this fall playing foot-ball. I wish I ’d stayed at home, as my fond mother wanted me to. Say, you ’re not fooling, are you? ”

“ Not a bit. Of course I ’ve exaggerated a trifle about the exclusiveness of our foot-ball society; it is n’t quite as bad as I made it out; but it ’s bad enough. If you happen to be a crackajack player with a reputation behind you, one of those prep school stars that come along once in a while, you ’re all right. But otherwise, Kingsford, you ’ll have a mighty hard time breaking into Hop’s foot-ball trust. I know, for I tried it myself last year.”

“ Oh, do you play? ”

“ I used to think so, but after working like a horse for three weeks and then pining away

for a fortnight on the side-lines, I changed my mind. I know *how* to play, but I don't *play*. You catch my meaning, I hope."

"Yes," said Evan, gloomily. "Still, I guess I'll have a try."

"Of course you will," said Rob, cheerfully. "It won't do any harm, and you might even have a little fun. Besides, miracles still happen; you might get a place on the second team as third substitute. By the way, where do you play?"

"I've played quarter mostly; sometimes half. I was quarter last year."

"On your school team?"

"Yes, grammar school. We won every game except one, too."

"Well, you might let that information leak out in Hop's direction; perhaps he will give you a fair show. Only thing is, I'm afraid he's taken a—a sort of prejudice against you."

"I guess he has," laughed Evan. "And, for that matter, I'm not crazy about him. Still, if he will let me on the team, I'll forgive him for mashing my nose flat."

"It doesn't look flat," said Rob, viewing it attentively. "It's a trifle red, but other-

wise normal. By ginger! I wonder what time it is. I'm getting hungry. Oh, there's no use looking at that clock on the mantel there. It has n't gone right for months. I borrowed one of the cog-wheels last spring, and now it has the blind staggers."

"It's twelve minutes to six," said Evan, looking at his watch. "When do we have supper?"

"In twelve minutes if we get there. I'll wash while you get your things out. Yes, that's your closet. There's some truck in there that belongs to Sandy. Pitch it out on the floor, and I'll ask Mrs. Crow to store it away for him. Hold on! That vest is n't his; it's mine. Confound that fellow! I looked for that thing all summer. Thought I'd lost it. You see, Sandy Whipple and I are just the same size, and so we wear each other's clothes most of the time. I guess you and I can't exchange that way, Kingsford. Your trousers would be several inches too short for little me. How about collars?"

"Thirteen and a half," said Evan.

"My size exactly! Thirteen and a half, fourteen, or fourteen and a half; I'm not fussy about collars. All through here." Rob

tossed the towel in the general direction of the wash-stand and looked around for his cap.

“ Where do we eat? ” asked Evan, filling the bowl.

“ Dining-hall ’s in Second House. If we hurry, maybe we can get at a side table. I ’m as hungry as a bear. I forgot all about dinner this noon. I got so interested in that silly piece of brass that they ’d stolen the dining-car before I knew it. Ready? Sometime I ’m going to fix it so we can go down by the window. It would be lots nearer than going by the stairs, and I ’ve got a dandy idea for a rope ladder! ”

CHAPTER III

EVAN MAKES ACQUAINTANCES

IT was still broad daylight when they left the entrance of Holden Hall and started across the yard, the golden end of a perfect September day. Down the long sloping hill, beyond the athletic field, the waters of Lake Matunuxet showed blue between the encircling foliage. Farther east the river wound its way through marsh and meadow toward the bay, some three miles distant. The railroad embankment was visible here and there, and due east the little town of Riverport lay huddled. The school buildings described a rude crescent, with Holden, the newest of the three dormitories, at one point and the gymnasium at the other. Next to Holden stood Second House, with the laboratory tucked in behind. Then came Academy; then First; then the gymnasium. Behind First House stood the principal's cottage, and here the land sloped

abruptly upward in forest, and Mount Gray-top raised its bald crown of scarred and riven granite hundreds of feet above the surrounding country. The elms in the yard still held green, although here and there a fleck of russet showed. On the lower slopes of the mountain a well-defined belt of maples was already turning yellow.

Rob and Evan were not the only boys who had recognized the advisability of being early on hand at supper in order to choose tables to their liking. The corridor leading to the dining-hall was pretty thickly sprinkled with boys of all ages between twelve and eighteen. Rob was greeted many times, and Evan was introduced to at least a dozen fellows whose names he did n't remember five minutes afterward. It was all very confused and noisy and jolly, and in the middle of it the doors were flung open, and the waiting throng surged into the dining-hall and made a decorous but determined rush for the tables.

Evan followed Rob down the room and across to a table under one of the broad windows. Here, however, a difficulty presented itself. The table seated eight, and seven of the places were already occupied. Evan, ob-

serving that, hung back, but Rob beckoned him on. At one side of the vacant seat sat a stout, cherub-faced youth of about Evan's age. Rob drew back the vacant chair and fixed his gaze on the stout youth.

"Why, — Jelly, — " he drawled in mock surprise, "what are you doing here? You're surely not thinking of sitting with your back to the window in all this draft, you with your delicate constitution? What would your parents say, Jelly? No, no, out you go. We can't have you falling ill; flowers are too expensive."

"I got this place, Rob, and I've a right to keep it," answered the boy. He spoke defiantly enough, but his tones lacked conviction, and he paused in the operation of unfolding his napkin. Rob patted him tolerantly on the shoulder.

"It is n't a question of right, Jelly; it's a question of what is best for you. You know you can't stand a draft; I know it; we all know it. It's your welfare we're considering. Now if you look sharp you can sneak across and drop into that chair that Hunt Firman has temporarily vacated; but you want to be quick."

Jelly was quick. He was out of his chair and around the table on the instant; and before Firman, who had gone across to a neighboring table to greet an acquaintance, was aware of it, Jelly had stolen his place. A contest ensued, Firman trying to oust Jelly without drawing the attention of the faculty, and Jelly, stable with his one hundred and forty-odd pounds, paying no attention to threats or blandishments.

“ I ’ll lick you after supper! ” hissed Firman.

“ Wonder if we ’ll have ham to-night,” remarked Jelly, serenely, to the table at large.

“ Get up, do you hear? That ’s my place, you big roly-poly! ”

“ I smell hot biscuits, anyway. Pass me the butter, Ned.”

“ You wait till I get hold of you! Rob, make him give me my seat. It ’s all your fault, anyhow. You might — ”

A bell tapped somewhere, and an instant hush fell over the hall. Firman ran to cover, subsiding in the first unoccupied chair he could find, leaving Jelly master of the situation. The laughter died into chuckles, the chuckles to snickers, and the snickers to silence, and from

the head of the hall came the deep voice of the principal, Dr. Farren, asking grace.

“ I ’d rather be on this side, anyway,” announced Jelly, as soon as conversation began again. “ It ’s too cold over there in winter, Rob.”

“ Well, by that time, Jelly,” was the sober reply, “ we may have you so strong and sturdy that you can stand it over here.”

Even Jelly joined in the laugh that ensued. Evan was aware that the six boys who, with Rob and himself, filled the table were viewing him with unconcealed interest and was relieved when Rob proceeded to introduce him.

“ Fellow Luculluses,” said Rob, “ I take pleasure in introducing to you my friend Mr. Kingsford. Mr. Kingsford is honoring the school with his presence for the first time. He hopes to remain with us at least until the end of the term. Kingsford, on your right you will find Mr. Law, of the well-known firm of Law and Order. Next, Mr. Pierce. Next, a gentleman whose acquaintance I have n’t the pleasure — ”

“ Peterson,” prompted Jelly.

“ Mr. Peterson. Next to Mr. Peterson, Mr. George Washington Jell; Mr. Jell speaking

eloquently, as you can see, for the excellence of the board provided. At the other end of the table you may dimly observe Mr. Devens. And here we have Mr. Wright, on my right. Now everybody knows everybody, and Jelly is requested to stop taking all the biscuits, as there are others here present."

It was a very jolly meal, with a good deal of laughter and much fragmentary conversation. The supper was excellent, and Evan was hungry and did full justice to the hashed chicken on toast, baked potatoes, cold lamb, hot biscuits, preserves, and cake. He also accepted a second cup of cocoa at Rob's suggestion, and then drank a glass of milk just to make certain of keeping life in his body until morning. And while he ate, as he took only a small part in the talk, he had opportunity to look about him.

The dining-hall was large and cheerful and well lighted. It occupied all one end of Second House, and so had windows on three sides. Between the windows were pictures, most of them photographs of Roman and Grecian ruins, while at either side of the door stood pedestals holding, on one side, a bust of Socrates and, on the other, a bust of Washington. There

were twenty-odd tables, accommodating at present one hundred and seventy students and the faculty and staff of the school. Dr. Farren occupied a small table at the head of the hall with the school secretary, Mr. Holt, and the matron, Mrs. Crane, or, as she was called, "Mrs. Crow."

"I don't know how she got that name," said Rob, as he pointed out the dignitaries. "Maybe it's on account of her black hair. Anyhow, it is n't because the fellows don't like her. She's a dear. That's Holt next to her. He's secretary. No one knows him very well. And there's the Doctor. The rest of the faculty is scattered. The white-haired chap over at the far table is just 'Joe'; real name Alden; Greek and Latin. The slim, youngish fellow over there is 'Mac,' who tries his level best to make me discern the beauties of algebra. He also teaches history, and it's a cinch. The big fellow down here on your left is 'Tommy' Osgood. Tommy teaches chemistry and is also and likewise physical director; and he's a tartar. Mr. Cupples, affectionately known as 'Cup,' is down there by the door. Cup pours French and German into you. Now you know the faculty. Be kind to them and

very patient. After supper I 'll take you over to Mrs. Crow's. You 'd better get on the right side of her, because she 's a mighty good sort and can do a lot for you if she wants to. And I 'll try and see the Doctor and tell him about your consumption."

"I never had a cold in my life," laughed Evan.

"Knock wood. And if the Doctor calls you over to the office, try and look as delicate as possible. You might cough a little, too. A hacking cough would help a lot." Rob turned from Evan and addressed Gus Devens, a large, ruddy-faced youth. "I say, Gus, what does the foot-ball situation look like to your practised eye?"

"Like the dickens," answered Gus, promptly and heartily.

"About the same as usual, then," suggested Pierce. "Say, fellows, why does n't some one do something?"

"Such as what?" asked Rob.

"Fire Hopkins!" blurted Jelly.

"Oh, Hop means well enough," said Joe Law.

"Yes, he does!" answered Devens, sarcastically. "I 'll wager I could pick a better team

out of the two lower classes than Hop will get together this fall. Adams will lick us again as sure as fate. They 've got almost all of last year's team left. Hop may mean well enough — only I don't believe it — but he certainly does n't *do* well enough. I'm sick of seeing the school beaten every year."

" We won year before last," said Law.

" Yes, we 've won once in five years," said Rob. " I suppose that 's all we ought to expect. They tell us that defeat is much better for us morally than victory, victory enlarging the cranium and making us vain and arrogant and unlovely. Remember ancient Rome."

" What about ancient Rome? " demanded Jelly.

" Eh? Oh — oh, nothing; just remember it. I heard Mac say that once in class, and it sounded rather well." When the laugh had passed, Rob addressed Devens again: " Are you going out this year? "

" Oh, I suppose so," answered Devens, disgustedly. " This will make the third time. But I'm sick of getting knocked around on the second team. I'm going to tell Hop that if he does n't give me a fair show for the first,

I 'll quit, and he can find some one else to do the human stone wall act for him. Look here, you fellows, you all know, every one of you, that I can play all around Bert Reid."

"That 's no joke," said Wright, and the others concurred.

"Well, then, why can't I get on? Favoritism, that 's all it is. Every one knows it, and there 's no harm in saying it. I don't talk like this outside of school, of course, but — "

"What we ought to have is a coach," declared Peterson.

"Of course we ought, and we 've tried hard enough to get one ever since I 've been here," answered Devens. "One year it 's one reason and the next year it 's another; anyway, we don't get him."

"Hop said last year he 'd be mighty glad to have a coach," said Law.

"Yes, but he wanted a fellow he knew and would n't talk about any one else. If the Doctor would take a decent interest in things — "

"He always begins to hum and haw about 'the danger of investing sport with undue prominence,' " said Pierce, disgustedly.

"Oh, the Doctor means well, too," protested Rob. "I 've got an idea in my head, you

chaps, and some day soon I 'll spring it. I 'm going to let it seethe a bit first."

"Another of your numerous patents?" asked Jelly, with a grin.

"Maybe. Look here, Gus, my friend Kingsford wants to try for the team. I told him what he was up against, but he has the — the indomitable will and reckless courage of his forebears, and refuses to be intimidated. You sort of put him up to the tricks, will you? See that he does n't get into any more trouble than necessary."

"Glad to," answered Gus Devens, with a friendly nod to Evan. "Played, have you, Kingsford?"

"Yes, quite a little."

"What?"

"Half and quarter; quarter mostly."

"Whew! we certainly could use a good quarter," said Wright. "Miller 's the limit. I hope you get a show, Kingsford."

"Yes, but don't expect it," remarked Jelly, despondently. "Just look at the way they treated me last year!"

A howl of laughter arose, and Jelly viewed his table-companions indignantly.

"That 's all right, you fellows, but I did

as well as Ward did. He did n't get through me very often, I can tell you! You know he did n't."

"You did great work, Jelly," said Rob, soothingly. "They ought to have kept you on the second. I have an idea that the reason Hop dropped you was only because he was afraid that sometime you 'd fall on the ball and squash the air out of it."

"Oh, you run along," growled Jelly. "I 'm going to try again this year, anyway, and I 'm going to make the second for keeps."

"Why don't you go out and be the ball?" asked Wright, pleasantly. Jelly pushed back his chair and walked disgustedly away, and his departure was the signal for a general exodus. Rob's progress was often interrupted, and Evan had to shake hands with many more new acquaintances, most of whom, as there were a great many new-comers wandering around the corridors that night, shook hands with him in a perfunctory way, muttered that they were glad to know him, and paid him no further attention. But Evan did n't mind. Although this was his first experience of boarding-school, he held no romantic notions of such places and so was not disappointed because

so far nothing romantic had happened. He drew out of the way and waited for Rob to get through talking, thinking to himself that it would be nice to have as many acquaintances as his new room-mate had, and making up his mind that some day the fellows of Riverport School should be as glad to talk to him as they now were to Rob Langton. While he stood there waiting, Frank Hopkins passed, talking to the tall youth of whom Evan had asked his way that afternoon. If they saw him they made no sign.

Presently Rob parted from the last of his acquaintances and, followed by Evan, reached the door.

“Sorry to keep you waiting,” he apologized. “Some of those chaps, though, I wanted to be nice to — for a reason. I’ll tell you why some day soon. Now let’s cut across to First House and call on Mrs. Crow.”

CHAPTER IV

MALCOLM WARNE

THEY found the door of the matron's office wide open and boys coming and going every minute. It was a good deal like a reception, Evan thought, as Rob, taking him by the arm, guided him into the room. The matron was a small, plump, middle-aged woman with red cheeks and very black hair, whom every fellow liked at first glance and usually worshiped devotedly by the end of his first term. Old boys returning to school made a bee-line from the stage to Number 1 First House, and shook hands with Mrs. Crow before they thought of anything else. Her sitting-room, or office as she preferred to call it, was a veritable museum of gifts from boys or their parents, gifts ranging from sea-shells to the mahogany arm-chair presented to her by last year's graduating class. And there was n't a thing so tiny and trivial that she could n't tell

you at once the name of the giver. She had very pleasant, kindly black eyes and a sweet voice, and loved a joke better than her afternoon tea. Rob wormed his way into the group about her, dragging Evan after him.

“How do you do, Mrs. Crow?” he cried, seizing her hand and shaking it violently. “Are n’t you glad to see me?”

“Why, Rob, how you do grow! Oh, my poor hand! Of course I ’m glad to see you, even if you did forget to come and say good-by to me last June.”

“I tried to, really, Mrs. Crow, but I could n’t stand the — the ordeal. It would have saddened my whole summer. I want you to know my brother Evan. Evan, this is Mrs. Crow, of whom I talked incessantly all summer.”

“How do you do?” asked Evan, taking the hand held out to him. Mrs. Crow gazed from Evan to Rob doubtfully. Some one sniggered. Evan felt somewhat embarrassed and looked appealingly at Rob’s beaming countenance.

“I don’t believe it,” said the matron, finally. “He ’s never your brother, Rob Langton; he does n’t look the least bit like you. Now is he?”

“My foster-brother, Mrs. Crow.”

“ He ’s just fooling,” said Evan. “ My name ’s Evan Kingsford, Mrs. Crow — I mean Mrs. — ”

“ Never mind,” she laughed; “ they all call me that. I ’m very glad to meet you, Mr. Kingsford. I hope you ’ll like us. Let me see, you ’re in Holden, are n’t you, if I ’m not mistaken? ”

“ Yes, ma’am. I was sent there at first.”

“ I remember; number 36.”

“ Wrong, Mrs. Crow; he ’s with me in 32,” said Rob.

“ Really? But I ’m sure my list says 36.”

“ They had him down for there, but he ’s very delicate, and 36 is such a cold room that I rescued him. I ’m going over to explain to the Doctor about it now. Come on, Evan.”

“ Well, I hope he will let you make the change,” said Mrs. Crow, dubiously. “ But you know he does n’t like to have the rooms empty.”

“ Then you tell him to let us have 36 for a parlor,” laughed Rob, dragging Evan away.

“ You must come to my teas, Mr. Kingsford,” called the matron. “ Any Friday between four and six. Don’t forget, please.”

“ I think,” said Rob, when they were out-

side again, "that I'd better see the Doctor alone. You go on over to the room and get your things unpacked. I'll be along in a few minutes. There you are, over there, the last building. Don't get lost."

Rob turned toward Academy Hall and the office, while Evan picked his way through the twilight across the yard under the elms. When he reached the second floor he found the door of 24 open and a group of fellows, among whom he instantly recognized Frank Hopkins and the tall youth, standing around it. The conversation, which had been eager and animated, died down as he came into sight. It was rather an ordeal to pass that group, but he made the best of it, viewing them calmly and casually as he took the last few stairs and turned down the corridor. To his surprise, some three or four of the fellows nodded to him, and he returned the greeting in like manner. But Hopkins only stared disdainfully, while the tall youth grinned annoyingly and began to hum in time to Evan's footsteps. The latter was glad when he was in 32 with the door closed behind him. Through the open transom, however, he heard the talk and laughter begin again, and caught the words, "Mighty well built, though, Hop.

You 'd better nab him for the team." He could n't hear the foot-ball captain's reply, but it was evidently humorous, judging from the laughter it summoned.

With reddening cheeks and a rather lonesome feeling he began the unpacking of his trunk, which, with Rob's, stood in the center of the room. His mother had placed a letter on top of the till, and, although it was a very sweet and dear letter, it rather increased his homesickness as he read it. He went on with his unpacking, feeling a little bit choky about the throat, and was glad when there came a knock at the door.

"Come!" he called.

The boy who entered paused in surprise when he saw Evan.

"Hello!" he said. "Oh, beg pardon. Where 's Rob?"

"He 's over at the office," answered Evan. "He will be up in a few minutes. Won't you wait?"

"Thanks." He glanced doubtfully about the room and then closed the door behind him and sat down. "Are you going in with Rob?"

"Do you mean am I going to room here?" asked Evan. "Yes; that is, I expect to. They

gave me 36, but Langton asked me to come in with him, and he 's trying to fix it up for me with the principal. That 's what he 's doing now."

" Oh, I see," murmured the other. He seemed rather disappointed, Evan thought, and wondered why. " I suppose you and he are old friends? " asked the stranger.

" No; I never saw him until this afternoon. It—it was very decent of him to ask me, I think."

" Yes," said the other, thoughtfully. " Don't let me stop you, please. I 'll just wait a minute for Rob."

Evan went on with his unpacking, catching now and then as he went to and fro between trunk and closet and bureau a glimpse of the caller. He was a very good-looking fellow, with dark hair and eyes and a softness about mouth and chin that was almost girlish. He sat with elbow on knee, and chin in hand, looking dreamily across the room, evidently quite forgetful of Evan's presence. After a while the silence grew oppressive.

" My name 's Kingsford," announced Evan. The other looked up slowly and nodded.

" Thanks. Mine 's Warne." Then he went



" 'HELLO!' HE SAID. 'OH, BEG PARDON. WHERE'S ROB?' "

back to his rapt study of the opposite wall. Evan was distinctly relieved when he heard Rob's footsteps in the hall.

"Well," said Rob, as he came in, "it's all — Hello, Mal! Where'd you come from? Been waiting long? Kingsford, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Warne, a particular friend of mine. Mal, this is Mr. Kingsford. He and I are going to try it together."

Malcolm Warne shook hands with a smile which displayed a set of very white teeth. It was a nice smile and lighted up the somewhat serious face very pleasantly.

"Happy to meet you," said Warne. Then, to Rob, "So he was just saying. I hope you will — like it — both of you." He had a very soft voice, spoke slowly, and had a way of chopping off the ends of his words that was unfamiliar to Evan.

"Oh, we'll get on all right, I think," said Rob, easily. "Sit down, Mal, and tell us what you did all summer. By the way, though, Kingsford, it's all right about the room. Doctor agreed with me that a chap with any tendency toward colds, grippe, pneumonia, and consumption ought not to live in 36. He got rather interested in your case, and I should n't

be surprised if he sent the doctor around to-morrow to report on you. If he comes, please cough for my sake! Well, I 've got to get my trunk unpacked. Go ahead and talk, Mal."

"No, I reckon I 'll go on. I just dropped in to say howdy to you."

"What? 'Go on' nothing! Sit down, you idiot, and tell me what 's been happening with you."

"Oh, nothing much. I had a very quiet summer. I was at home most of the time, although we went down to Virginia Beach in August for a couple of weeks. I 'll see you to-morrow, Rob. Good night, Mr. Kingsford. Pleased to have met you. Get Rob to bring you over to see me soon. So long, Rob."

"Well, if you insist on going," said Rob, following the caller to the door. "What 's the matter, Mal? Anything wrong?" They passed out, Rob drawing the door shut behind him. Evan heard their low voices outside in the hallway for several minutes. Then Rob reappeared, looking worried.

"Now there 's a crazy idiot," he said, with a frown, thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets and spreading his long legs apart.

"Why?" asked Evan.

“ He wanted to come in here with me, and he never said a word about it. Says he was waiting to make sure I had n’t any one in view. He ’s too blamed sensitive.”

“ Well, that ’s easily fixed,” said Evan, lightly. “ It won’t take me ten minutes to move across to 36. That ’s where I belong, anyway, Langton. I ’d rather do it, really.”

“ Not much! But I ’ve got an idea.”

He hurried out, crossed the hall, knocked on the opposite door, and threw it open.

“ Hello, Spalding! ” Evan heard him say. “ Want to use your window a second. Oh, Mal! Come back a minute, will you? ” Evidently Warne heard, for Rob only sent one hail across the yard.

“ Here ’s the idea,” he went on, as he returned to 32. “ We ’ll get Warne to move into 36. He never knows whether he ’s hot or cold, and he ’s dead anxious to get out of the room he ’s in. He ’s in First House with a chap named Gammage; decent chap enough, but he and Warne don’t hit it off. Mal ’s a Southerner, from North Carolina — or South, I ’ve forgotten which. Where *is* Wilmington, anyway? ”

“ Wilmington? In Delaware, is n’t it? ”

“ Is it? Then I guess Wilmington is n’t the place; I ’m pretty sure he ’s from one of the Carolinas. Anyway, he ’s an awfully nice fellow, and I want you to like him. Here he comes. Say, Mal, I ’ve thought of a great scheme. Sit down and I ’ll unfold it. Kingsford here was booked for 36. So that leaves 36 empty. You see the Doctor and get him to let you move into it. You don’t mind rooming alone, do you? Besides, you can make this room home if you like to.”

“ I should n’t mind that a bit,” said Warne.

“ Good! But I ought to tell you that 36 is a cold old hole; there ’s something wrong with the pipes — some bronchial trouble, I guess. Anyway, in cold weather you ’ll pretty nearly freeze. But you can always study over here, you know.”

“ I don’t mind a cold room. That ’s one thing Gammage and I are always scrapping about. He likes it about eighty. Do you think the Doctor will let me change? ”

“ I don’t see why not. Tell him that you don’t get on with what ’s-his-name; tell him you like a cold room. He ought to be glad to have some one in 36 that won’t kick all the time for heat. He ’s over at the office now. Go

ahead and tackle him before he gets any one else down for the room. And come right back and let 's hear what he says."

Malcolm Warne was back in ten minutes, looking very pleased.

"He said yes, Rob. My, but I 'm tickled. I 'd sleep in an ice-chest to get rid of Gamage."

"That 's fine, Mal. I told Kingsford that you were disappointed about rooming in here, and he offered to get out. But I knew you would n't want him to do that."

"No, indeed," said Malcolm, warmly, glancing gratefully across at Evan. "It was very good of you, though, Kingsford."

"Not a bit," murmured Evan.

"I say, you chaps," began Rob. Then he paused doubtfully. The others waited, looking inquiringly at him where he stood rumpling his mutinous locks with a paper-cutter.

"Why, just this," he went on presently. "Here are three of us, all pretty good fellows — speaking for the rest of you, that is. Now let 's cut out this surname nonsense. My name 's Rob, yours is Malcolm, or Mal for short, and yours is Evan. There, that 's settled." He tossed the paper-knife down.

“ Now I want to show you fellows a little idea that occurred to me coming back from the office a while ago. Bring up your chairs.”

“ What is it? ” asked Evan, exchanging an amused glance with Malcolm.

“ It ’s an improved foot-scraper for door-steps. It ’s all well enough to get the mud off the soles of your shoes, but why not clean it off the uppers, too? Now, look here. Where ’s my pad? Either of you got a pencil? Thanks. Now then! ”

CHAPTER V

EVAN IS WARNED

“WHAT ’S the name? ”

It was the tall youth whom Evan had begun to thoroughly detest who asked the question, and who, with note-book in hand and pencil poised, impatiently awaited an answer.

“Kingsford,” replied Evan.

“What age? ” continued the other, looking as though he had never seen Evan before.

“Fifteen.”

“What class? ”

“Junior.”

“Ever played foot-ball? ”

“Three years.”

“Whereabouts? ”

“Elmira, New York.”

“What position, I mean, you ninny! ”

“Quarter — and half, a little.”

“We don’t need backs. Want to try for end? ”

“ I suppose so; yes.”

“ Don’t do it if it ’s going to hurt you,” sneered the other, turning away to catechise the next candidate. Evan looked after him angrily and then turned to his nearest neighbor, who happened to be Mr. George Washington Jell, resplendent in a new pair of khaki trousers which, because they had to be of generous proportions about the waist, fell ungracefully half-way to his feet.

“ Who ’s that chap? ” asked Evan.

“ Edgar Prentiss. He ’s manager. He ’s pretty much the whole show, for that matter. He and Hop are as thick as thieves, and Hop does about as Prentiss says. He ’s no good; I hope he stubs his toe.”

“ So do I,” agreed Evan, with enthusiasm. Jelly beamed on him.

“ He ’s a regular cad; no one likes him — except Hop. I made a good joke about him last year. Want to hear it? ”

“ Yes,” said Evan, good-naturedly. “ What was it? ”

“ It ’s a conundrum. What is a foot-ball manager? Give it up? He ’s the captain’s apprentice. See? Prentiss — apprentice? ”

Evan had to laugh, not so much at the



“ ‘ EVER PLAYED FOOTBALL? ’ ”

joke as at Jelly's eagerness for appreciation. "That 's all right," he said. "What are you trying for, Jell?"

"Guard — or 'most anything. But, say, don't call me Jell; no one ever does; and it sounds funny. Besides, I don't mind. I know I'm fat, and I can't help it. I'd rather be fat than be a bean-pole like Prentiss."

"Ends and backs this way!" called a voice, and Evan trotted down the field to where a lad wearing a tattered light blue jersey and an air of authority was impatiently awaiting.

Practice was neither hard nor long that first afternoon. Some thirty-odd candidates had reported, of whom twenty or so represented what remained of last year's first and second teams. The new candidates numbered scarcely more than a baker's dozen. Frank Hopkins, although in foot-ball attire, took no part in the drudgery of passing and falling on the ball, contenting himself with wandering about the field or talking with Prentiss on the side-line. The real work was in charge of three of the first team members, Carter, Connor and Ward. There was very little system in evidence, and the veterans shirked barefacedly. Toward the end of the hour there was a good

deal of rather aimless punting across the field and then the fellows were dismissed with instructions to report every afternoon at four o'clock.

Evan, a little tired and sore, for the day had been a very warm one and a lazy summer had put him rather out of condition, walked up to the gymnasium with Gus Devens and Jelly.

"How did you get on?" asked Devens.

"All right, I guess. I told Prentiss I was out for quarter or half but he said they didn't need those things and told me I'd better try for end. I've never played end, but I suppose I could learn."

"I dare say. How about you, Jelly?"

"I don't know. I saw Hop this noon and told him I wanted a fair show and he said I'd get it. Maybe I will, and maybe I won't. All I want now is a shower."

"Here too," agreed Devens. "Anything doing to-night, Jelly?"

"A little something, I guess," replied Jelly cautiously, with a quick glance at Evan. "I haven't heard much about it."

Evan looked at the others inquiringly, but asked no questions, and Devens changed the conversation.

“ That ’s a nice pair of trousers you ’ve got there, Jelly. Why don’t you take a turn in them around the bottoms so as to keep them out of the mud? ”

“ You dry up,” responded Jelly good-humoredly. “ I had to have them big so as I could get them around me. I guess I ’ll ask Mrs. Crow to cut them off for me.”

“ I would. Maybe she can make you an overcoat of the trimmings. Got a locker, Kingsford? ”

“ Yes, thanks,” Evan replied as they climbed the gymnasium steps and pushed open the big oak door. “ But I have n’t any towels yet. Can you loan me one? ”

“ Sure thing — if I have any. I always forget to have ’em washed.”

But investigation proved that he had three clean ones in his locker and he handed one over to Evan.

“ Toss it in the bottom here when you ’re through with it, will you? ” he asked. Evan promised and went off to get ready for his bath, encountering on the way Mr. George Washington Jell, who, hopping around on one foot, was pulling what appeared to be yards and yards of khaki trouser off the other leg.

“Excuse me,” panted Jelly, as he bumped into Evan. “Oh, that you? These fool breeches — ”

“Here, sit down,” laughed Evan, “and I’ll pull them off. There you are. I really think I’d have Mrs. Crow fix those. You’ve got about a yard more than you need.”

“Or ankled,” growled Jelly, tossing the discarded trousers on to the bench. “Thanks, Kingsford. I’ll do as much for you sometime maybe.”

“I hope you won’t have to,” Evan laughed.

A half-hour later he walked back alone up the hill to Holden, and as he went he reviewed his first day at Riverport. It had been pleasant enough on the whole, he decided. Rob had awakened him at a quarter past seven and there had ensued a mad scramble into clothes and across to Academy Hall for morning prayers. Breakfast had been at eight, a jolly, leisurely meal with the big windows open and the September sunlight flooding the tables. At nine he had gone to his first class, presided over by Mr. Alden, or Old Joe as the boys called him. This was his Latin class, and at eleven came Greek, with Old Joe again presiding. Previous to that there had been a half-hour of

mathematics under Mr. McGill, and in the afternoon, at three, there was English from the principal, Dr. Farren. In all, aside from physical training, which, as long as he was playing foot-ball, was not required of him, he had nineteen hours of recitations a week. This didn't sound much, but it was evident that the work was going to be pretty stiff and the nineteen hours in class meant a good many other hours of hard preparation. Dr. Farren's English class looked formidable, and so did the Greek, which study was entirely new to Evan.

He had n't seen much of Rob save at meals, for, although they attended the same classes, their seats were in each case separated by the length of the room, since Evan, as a newcomer, was forced to accept whatever unclaimed space he could find. But he was sure that he and Rob were going to get on very well together and was beginning to feel rather grateful to Frank Hopkins for bringing about the meeting which had resulted so fortunately. If Hopkins would let him on to the team, thought Evan, he would be more than willing to cry quits.

It was still only a little after half-past five when he reached his room, and so, as Rob was

not there and he had it quite to himself, he decided to write a letter home. He had finished two pages of his epistle when there was a knock on the door and Malcolm Warne entered.

“ Hello, are you all alone? ” he asked.
“ Where ’s Rob? ”

“ I don’t know. I have n’t seen him since English 3. Have you got moved? ”

“ Yes. I thought perhaps you ’d like to come over and see my room.”

“ I would,” said Evan..

“ It is n’t quite as nice as my other place,” explained Malcolm as they crossed the corridor together, “ but it fixes up rather well, I think. And it ’s going to be peachy not having any one in with me.”

“ Well,” exclaimed Evan as he paused inside the door of 36 and looked about him, “ I did n’t see your other room, but if it beat this it must have been a wonder! Gee, but you ’ve got a lot of dandy truck! Where did you get all the pictures? Is that couch yours? It looks good enough to sleep on.”

“ Sit down,” invited Malcolm. “ Try that wicker chair. Most of these things I brought up with me when I came, although I ’ve fetched

one or two things since then. Glad you like my pictures.”

“ I like everything,” replied Evan warmly. “ It looks — it looks almost like home! I don’t see how you ever got fixed up so quickly. Why did n’t you let me help you? ”

“ Oh, it was n’t any bother, and I liked doing it. Besides, I reckon you were pretty busy playing foot-ball, were n’t you? There ’s Rob, I think. I ’ll call him in.”

“ Talk about your palatial mansions! ” exclaimed Rob as he surveyed the room. “ I tell you what, Evan; we ’ll use this for our parlor and all sleep in 32.”

“ I ’m afraid Mrs. Crow would n’t stand for that,” laughed Malcolm. “ And then, too, you say this is cold.”

“ Cold! What of it? Who would care whether he was cold or warm when he could lie in the midst of such luxury? ” Rob stretched himself on the leather couch and crushed innumerable pillows under his head. “ We will now have soft music and light refreshments, Mal.”

“ I ’ve got some crackers,” said Malcolm eagerly.

“ Fetch them along. What do you think of

all this, Evan? Is n't our little friend a — a one of those things commencing with an S? ”

“ Cinch? ” asked Evan gravely.

Rob viewed him doubtfully.

“ Cinch! That does n't begin — Oh, you run away and play! Syb—sybarite! That 's the word. What is a sybarite, Mal? ”

“ Oh, a man fond of good things, I reckon. Actually the Sybarites were inhabitants of Sybaris, in southern Italy. Don't you remember that Seneca tells of a Sybarite who complained that he had n't slept well, and when they asked him why he told them that he had found a rose petal doubled under him and that it had hurt him? ”

“ Is n't he a wonder? ” demanded Rob admiringly of Evan. “ Do you wonder that he 's a whole class ahead of us stupids? Frankly, though, Mal, I don't recall that story of Mr. Seneca's, but he said a whole lot of things I 've forgotten — or never heard of. Anyway, that 's what you are, Mal, a sybarite, a blooming sybarite.”

Malcolm passed the crackers around and they tried their best to spoil their appetites for dinner. Luckily the supply of crackers gave out before their end was accomplished.



“‘TALK ABOUT YOUR PALATIAL MANSIONS!’ EXCLAIMED ROB.”

Rob, who, stretched luxuriously on the couch, had been too busy eating to talk, suddenly began to moan and grimace in a frightful manner and roll around.

“What’s the matter with you?” asked Malcolm.

“I — I think,” muttered Rob, speaking thickly because his mouth was full, “I think there must be a crumpled rose petal under me.”

Investigation, however, proved the rose petal to be nothing more romantic than a block of wood in Rob’s pocket, a block which, so he declared, was to be fashioned into the model of his greatest invention as soon as he could borrow somebody’s knife, his own having all blades broken.

They went over to supper together and as they parted from Malcolm at the dining-room door the latter brushed against Evan and thrust a bit of paper into his hand. Puzzled but discreet, Evan dropped it into his pocket and promptly forgot all about it until supper was almost over. Then, remembering it because Malcolm’s name was mentioned, he drew it out cautiously and read it under the protection of his napkin. The message, written in a tiny

neat hand on hardly more than a square inch of paper, was short.

“ Hazing to-night ” (it ran). “ Bunk in with me and they won’t find you. Destroy this and don’t tell.”

CHAPTER VI

THE HAZING

EVAN tore the note into tiny bits and scattered them under the table, something undoubtedly in defiance of the rules. After supper, at which the foot-ball practice was the main subject of discussion, Evan and Rob, accompanied by Jelly, went back to Holden. Malcolm Warne had not returned, but that did n't prevent Rob from taking possession of 36 and doing the honors. Jelly was properly impressed with so much magnificence and declared that next year he was going to make his folks furnish his room just like Malcolm's. In a lull of the conversation Evan introduced the subject which since the receipt of Malcolm's mysterious warning had occupied not a little of his thoughts.

“ Do they haze here, Rob? ” he asked.

There was a quick interchange of glances between Rob and Jelly. Then Rob smiled carelessly and shrugged his shoulders.

“ You might call it that,” he said. “ The new ones have to go through a few stunts, but they don’t amount to much. Faculty bars real hazing, which it ought. You ’ll probably be requested to sing a song or do a dance some night, but you need n’t be worried about it.”

“ I ’m not at all worried,” answered Evan quietly. “ I only wanted to know what to expect.”

“ They made me recite ‘ Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night,’ ” said Jelly, smiling foolishly at the recollection.

“ It was funny, too,” laughed Rob. “ Just picture Jelly in his little white nightie spouting that with inappropriate gestures! ”

“ I would n’t have minded if it had n’t been for the gestures,” said Jelly with a grin. “ They made me do all sorts of fool things, like pulling the bell-rope and clasping my hands.”

“ Yes, and when it came to the last they made him swing by his hands from the transom. I can see him yet, kicking his legs back and forth and gurgling ‘ Curfew shall *not* ring to-night! ’ ”

“ Well, I hope they don’t ask me for poetry,” said Evan, “ for I don’t know any.”

“ Better get Malcolm to coach you,” Jelly suggested. “ He knows every line of poetry that was ever written, I guess. And I *have* thought,” — dropping his voice to a hoarse whisper — “ that he even writes it ! ”

“ Of course he does,” said Rob. “ Every Southerner reads poetry and writes it. Southerners are romantic — whatever that is.”

Presently Malcolm returned, and Jelly took his departure, declaring that he supposed he would have to study although he had quite forgotten how. At Rob’s suggestion Malcolm brought his books into 32 and the three found places about the old green-topped table and prepared their lessons. It was hard going, though, and there were many interruptions, and after a while Malcolm gathered up his books and declared that he would have to go back to his own room if he was to do any work.

“ Sorry, Mal,” said Rob. “ It ’s my fault. I can’t seem to get my mind on lessons to-night. I ’ve thought of a way to make that foot-scraper a lot better. Supposing that instead of having the brush — ”

“ Never mind,” laughed Malcolm. “ You tell me about it to-morrow. Good night.”

“ Are n’t you coming back after study? ”

“ No, I ’m going to bed.” He shot a questioning look at Evan. Evan smiled and shook his head slightly.

“ What are you idiots signalling about? ” asked Rob. “ What ’s up? Or is n’t it any of my business? ”

“ It is n’t,” answered Malcolm. “ You ’d better change your mind, though, Evan.”

“ No, I guess not. I ’m much obliged, though.”

“ Well, if you do — ” Malcolm left the sentence unfinished. “ Good night, fellows.”

“ Good night,” they echoed. Rob was already busy with the problem of the improvement of the foot-scraper, drawing strange lines on a fly-leaf. Evan went back to his algebra. After a while the bell in the tower of Academy Hall struck nine and he closed his book with a sigh and gathered his papers together. Rob was still drawing, his unruly hair straggling down over his puckered forehead. Evan watched amusedly for a minute. Then,

“ Got your lessons, Rob? ” he asked gravely.

“ Eh? What? ” Rob looked up with a startled frown. “ What time is it? ”

“ Just struck nine.”

“ Jingo! I ’ve got to get busy. Look at this, though, Evan. I ’ve got it dead to rights now. I ’ll bet it will work finely.” So for the next five minutes Evan listened to an explanation of the drawings and a eulogy of the invention. Then Rob resolutely turned his mind to the Anabasis, remarking sadly that it was all Greek to him, and Evan finished his letter. They went to bed at ten and Rob fell promptly to sleep. Evan, however, with Malcolm’s warning in mind, preferred to stay awake and await developments. The dormitory was very quiet, and when fully a half-hour had gone by, Evan began to think that Malcolm had mistaken the date. He closed his eyes at last, for he was really very sleepy, and was afloat in that delicious state between slumber and waking when there sounded a quiet but peremptory knock on the door. Rob did n’t hear it but Evan was wide awake on the instant. He slid out of bed, stumbled across the room and fumbled at Rob’s patent latch.

“ Open! ” commanded a voice outside.

“ All right,” answered Evan, “ but you ’ll have to wait until I find the combination of this plaguey thing.”

Then the latch slipped back and the door

swung inward. In the hall were some twenty boys variously attired.

“What ’s wanted?” asked Evan innocently.

Frank Hopkins, who was apparently master of ceremonies, replied grimly:

“You are. Come on.”

“What for?” asked Evan.

“Never you mind. Just come along.”

“Hello! What ’s doing?” Rob appeared behind Evan, blinking. “Oh, I see. Buck up, Evan, it ’s soon over. I ’ll join the mob and see the fun.”

So Evan was marched off in custody, feeling somewhat ridiculous in his night attire. However, there were plenty of others who boasted no more elaborate costumes than his, for pajamas appeared to be the proper dress. There was nothing solemn in the occasion. Every one whispered or laughed under his breath and a handful of more cheerful spirits joined arms and did a snake-dance down the hall. Evan was conducted to a room at the far end of the corridor, a room which, because it was larger than most, was regularly used on such occasions. Here, standing dejectedly about, were six other new boys, one of them, a youth of not over twelve years, looking at once pathetic and

ridiculous in a long nightgown several sizes too large for him. Evidently Evan was the last of the victims, for after he had entered with his captors the door was closed and bolted. The room was crowded to its full capacity and there was a general scramble for posts of vantage. The two beds served as grand-stands, all those who could securing seats on the edge and more standing up behind them. The others formed a circle about the center of the room, the study table having been pushed aside. Evan wondered if Malcolm was there, but failed to see him.

If Frank Hopkins was master of ceremonies, Edgar Prentiss was undoubtedly his first lieutenant and a most able one. Hopkins looked over the initiates disgustedly.

“A mighty small crop this year,” he said, “and a pretty poor one, too. Who’s first, Ed?”

“Let’s have Little Nemo,” said Prentiss, pointing to the boy in the nightgown. “Come out here, Little Nemo. Step forward and make a nice bow to the company.”

The youth obeyed, trying very hard to smile.

“What’s your name, kid?” demanded Hopkins.

“ George Winship.”

“ Say ‘ sir ’ when addressing the Honorable Court,” Prentiss commanded. “ What are you doing here? ”

“ I don’t know — sir.”

“ You don’t know? What did you come here for? ”

“ To learn, sir.”

“ Good. Can you sing? ”

“ N-no, sir.”

“ All right. Then go ahead and sing.”

“ I can’t.”

“ You’ve got to.” The boy looked distressedly around the circle of amused faces. “ What — what shall I sing? ” he asked.

“ Anything,” answered Hopkins. “ Only get at it.”

“ Do you know ‘ Rock-a-bye, Baby ’? ” asked Prentiss, scoring a laugh from the audience. The boy shook his head.

“ All I know is ‘ Rock of Ages,’ I guess,” he said apologetically.

“ Let’s hear that, then,” said Prentiss. But there was a murmur of disapproval and Rob growled:

“ Shut up, Prentiss; that’s a hymn. Cut it out and let the kid go.”

“ Hello, Lanky Rob, you here? ” returned Prentiss. “ Don’t butt in. Can you recite anything, Little Nemo? ” The boy shook his head again.

“ Sure? ” demanded Hopkins suspiciously.

“ Yes — sir.”

“ What can you do, then? Have n’t you any parlor tricks? ” The boy considered a moment, painfully anxious to oblige but at a loss what to say. Then, his face lighting up,

“ I can dance the Highland fling! ” he announced eagerly. A howl of amused approval went up.

“ Go ahead, kid! ”

“ Fling away! ”

“ I thought all along he was a Scotchman! ”

“ I — I usually have music,” said the boy doubtfully.

“ Sorry, but the bagpipes have just left,” said Hopkins. “ Let ’s have it without music, kid.”

So young Winship danced the Highland fling for them, his face very serious and his long nightgown flopping and writhing about him with ludicrous effect. Some of the fellows began to hum and after that the boy did rather well, for he knew the dance thoroughly and was

light and graceful. But it was terribly funny and even Evan had to laugh with the others. Winship ended amidst a howl of approval and much clapping.

“ You ’re all right, kid,” they assured him, and Hopkins let him go to find a place amongst the audience. The next youth was all ready with a song, but he was much too anxious and so Hopkins refused to allow him to sing and made him recite instead. He was a serious youth, and after he had reeled off two verses of “ The Launching of the Ship ” some one in the background threw a pillow at him and he was allowed to go in peace. The next victim had an extensive repertoire of popular songs and made such a hit that he was kept at it until he ran out of breath. And so it went for almost an hour. A stout youth was made to stand on his head — a feat which he only accomplished after innumerable failures — and then was required to imitate the cries of every animal any one in the audience could think of. His imitations were not successful as imitations but they were funny, notably when he was instructed to make a noise like an eel and whistled through his teeth. There was more dancing and a pale-faced, red-haired boy re-

cited "Casey at the Bat" and won liberal applause. Evan was saved for the last, a fact which caused him some uneasiness. He would have much preferred to have some one other than Hopkins managing affairs. His turn came at last and Hopkins told him to step out.

"What's your name, little boy?"

"Evan Kingsford."

"Sir!"

"Sir."

"Kingsford, eh? Not — not Kingsford the great quarter-back, of course?"

"No — that is, no, sir," answered Evan, flushing a little in spite of his determination not to let them worry him.

"Then you don't play foot-ball?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"What position?"

"Quarter-back," answered Evan good-naturedly.

"Ah! What did I tell you, Ed? It is — it really is the famous Mr. Kingsford of whom we have all heard. There's no use trying to deceive us, Mr. Kingsford. All is discovered. We know you. You were quarter-back on the All-America Girls' Preparatory School Team last year!"

Every one laughed at that, Evan as quickly as any.

“Now, Mr. Kingsford,” went on Hopkins, very much pleased by his wit, “we will ask you to give us a few lessons in the rudiments of foot-ball. A little more room, please. Ed, produce the pigskin.”

Prentiss pulled a foot-ball from under the bed. A strong cord was attached to the lacings, and Evan viewed it with misgivings. Hopkins placed the ball on the floor, retaining the end of the cord.

“Now, Mr. Kingsford, kindly show us how to kick. Aim the ball toward the wall, please, so as not to break a window.”

Evan knew well enough what to expect, but he went through the motions of kicking from placement. Of course the ball was n't there when his foot swung at it, and of course the audience was vastly amused. This performance was gone through with several times, Prentiss at each attempt shading his eyes with his hand and announcing the distance made, as:

“Fine work, Kingsford! Forty-five yards and excellent direction!” “Fifty-odd that time, but a little too low. Try again.” “Bet-



"HE WENT THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF KICKING FROM PLACEMENT."

ter, much better! Sixty yards at least and a beautiful corkscrew! Wonderful! Marvelous! ”

Evan was almost as much amused as the others, and Hopkins did n't like that. So,

“ Now, Mr. Kingsford, if you please, we will have a little falling on the ball.” A chorus of delighted laughter greeted this announcement. Falling on the ball was n't quite as funny as kicking it, to Evan at least, although every one else enjoyed it hugely. The floor was very, very hard and, of course, the ball was never there when he dropped, never save once when he was too quick for Hopkins and managed to snuggle the pigskin under his arm before the captain could yank it away. This feat won applause from the spectators and a scowl from Hopkins.

“ Put more ginger into it, Mr. Kingsford,” commanded the latter. “ You 're not half trying. That 's better! ” Evan's elbow and hip crashed against the floor and the foot-ball bounded out of his reach. The audience howled approval.

“ Now try a dive, Mr. Kingsford. Stand off there about six feet and let us see what you can do with a moving ball.”

But Evan was feeling pretty sore and lame by this time, and he rebelled.

“ I guess I ’ve done enough,” he said good-humoredly. “ This floor is n’t quite as soft as the turf.”

“ Enough,” said Prentiss, “ why, we can never see enough of such clever work, Mr. Kingsford! ”

“ Well, I ’ve had enough, if you have n’t,” replied Evan doggedly.

“ You ’ll do as we tell you,” said Hopkins. “ We ’re managing this show. Now you get over there and — ”

“ I won’t, I tell you. I ’m not going to break my bones for you. I ’ve done as much as any of the others already, and I don’t intend to get all lamed up.”

“ That ’s right, Hop,” said Rob, and some of the others agreed. But Hopkins was n’t ready to let go.

“ You dry up, Rob! ” he snarled. “ You have n’t got anything to say about this. You have n’t any business in here anyhow; you ’re a junior. This is upper class, and so you shut up.”

“ You can make me, I guess — not,” drawled Rob.

“ There are plenty of us here to run you out of the room,” answered Hopkins angrily.

“ All right, come try it. Let ’s have a little rough-house,” replied Rob smilingly. But there was an expression about his eyes and mouth that Hop did n’t just like, and while he was hesitating some of the others broke in.

“ Oh, cut out the slanging! ”

“ Shut up, Lanky! ”

“ Go ahead with the show, Hop! ”

Hopkins glared angrily at Rob and then turned his attention again to Evan.

“ Come on, fresh kid,” he commanded. “ Do as we tell you.”

“ I ’m through,” said Evan quietly.

“ Then we ’ll make you! Put him over there, Prentiss.”

“ Better not try it,” said Evan as the tall Prentiss came toward him. He was still smiling, but the smile was rather set and his eyes were fixed very steadily on Prentiss. Also, he stepped back and clenched his fists in a very business-like way. But Prentiss was no coward, and, besides, he was much bigger than Evan. There might have been real trouble in another moment had not the light suddenly gone out, plunging the room into complete

darkness. A howl of laughter went up and good-natured rough-house began as the fellows swarmed from their places. Some one found the foot-ball and it went banging about in the darkness regardless of heads.

“ Light! Let there be light! ”

“ I want to go home! ”

“ Look out for the table, fellows! ”

And above the pandemonium could be heard Hopkins angrily demanding that some one turn the light on again. Evan, in the thick of the swaying, laughing throng, felt a hand on his arm.

“ This you, Evan? ” whispered Rob’s voice.

“ Yes. ”

“ This way then, quietly. Make for the door. ” Evan followed and in another moment they were in the dimly-lighted hall running for their room. Once inside Rob bolted the door and closed the transom. Then, much pleased with his strategy, he sat down on his bed and chuckled. From the other end of the hall came the sound of stampeding youths and from the floor below Mr. McGill’s deep voice:

“ Fellows, be quiet up there! Go to your rooms! ”

CHAPTER VII

UP THE MOUNTAIN

FOR several days after the hazing, fellows — many of whom were only dimly familiar to Evan — accosted him as he passed with such remarks as: “ Kick it again, Kingsford! ” or, “ Sixty yards easy that time! ” But it was all good-natured, and Evan only smiled and went on, and presently the joke died out. It was a very busy first week of school for Evan. In the first place, it was no easy matter to get shaken down to his studies, many of which were either quite new to him or presented in an entirely new way. And there was daily practice on the gridiron after recitation hours, and plenty of hard work in the shape of study in the evenings. But there was fun too, and, on one occasion at least, even adventure.

It was Malcolm Warne who suggested the trip up Graytop. Football practice was over and as Evan started up the slope toward the

gymnasium he encountered Malcolm and Rob. Rob was lazing along with his hands in his pockets and a good-natured grin on his face, and Malcolm was talking earnestly to him as though striving to arouse him from his mental indolence. It was Rob who called to Evan.

“ Hello, there, you Evan! Come over here.”

“ I’ve got to change.”

“ What of it? ” asked Rob. “ You can stop a minute, can’t you? What do you suppose this chump wants to do? You’d never guess! ”

“ I’m not even going to try,” replied Evan, with a glance at Malcolm’s amused countenance. “ I’m too tired.”

“ Well, he wants to climb Graytop.”

“ Does he? ” Evan turned and let his gaze travel up the side of the mountain. “ Why not? ”

“ I guess you never tried it,” said Rob. “ Moreover, he wants us to go with him.”

“ Now? ” asked Evan, startled.

“ No, to-morrow,” answered Malcolm. “ It’s Saturday, you know. We can start in the morning, take some grub and cook dinner on the top. It’s a lot of fun. Rob is such a lazy-bones that he thinks he can’t climb it.”

“ Me? ” said Rob indignantly. “ Why, I’ve

been up there a half-dozen times. It's one of the easiest things I do. I was only considering Evan. He's young and tender and it's a hard climb up there. You don't want to go, do you, Evan? "

" Sure I do," answered his roommate heartily. " I should think it would be lots of fun. I love to picnic on mountain-tops."

" Well, I'm not going to lug the basket," sighed Rob.

" We won't take any basket," explained Malcolm. " I know a trick worth two of that. We'll divide the stuff into three lots and each of us will take our share in a pack."

" A what? "

" A pack; done up in a bundle and tied on our backs."

" You must think I'm a mule," Rob grumbled. " All right, though, I don't want to spoil anyone's fun."

And so it was finally settled that they were to start out bright and early after breakfast the next morning. The matter of rations was left to Malcolm because, as Rob put it, he could look pathetic and move the cook's heart. It was necessary to obtain permission for the expedition and Rob attended to that that evening.

“ I told Doc,” he related after supper, “ that we were taking Evan up to show him the beauties of the surrounding country. And Doc was real pleased; said it was very thoughtful of me and showed a nice disposition. I guess I made a hit all right.”

“ What are we going to take to eat? ” asked Evan.

“ Steak and potatoes and bread and coffee,” answered Malcolm. “ We ’ll broil the steak over the fire and bake the potatoes — ”

“ And boil the bread and toast the coffee,” interrupted Rob flippantly. “ You talk like a guinea-pig, Mal! Is n’t there going to be any pie or doughnuts? ”

“ Yes, if I can raise them.”

“ I hope you can. Doughnuts ought to be raised, ought n’t they? I ’ll carry the doughnuts because they ’ll be light.”

“ You ’re an idiot,” laughed Malcolm. “ We ’ll have to take a coffee pot along, too. Last year some of us went up there and took a lot of coffee and forgot the pot.”

“ And this is the chap to whom we are going to entrust our young and innocent lives! ” exclaimed Rob dejectedly. “ A chap who has a record like that! I refuse to go along! ”

“ Oh, you ’ll go all right enough when you see the steak and things I ’ll get,” scoffed Malcolm.

“ Huh! I know all about picnic steak. It ’s burned black on the outside and is all red and raw in the middle. And it tastes of smoke.”

“ Not the way I cook it,” laughed the other. “ You wait.”

“ Oh, I suppose you do it in a chafing-dish! The worst of it is, fellows, that after you’ve climbed up there you’re so hungry that you can eat anything. Last time I went up I had to gnaw the bark off the trees for the last half-mile to keep up my strength.”

“ I wondered who had been blazing the trees up there,” said Malcolm innocently.

“ Somebody’s telling whoppers,” laughed Evan, “ for I can see from down here that there aren’t any trees on the top.”

“ There were, but Rob ate them all down! Well, nine o’clock sharp, you fellows — don’t forget.”

Rob groaned.

“ Forget! I wish I could. I shall dream of it all night. If I have the nightmare, Evan, please wake me up.”

“ You have something that sounds like a nightmare about every night,” answered Evan dryly. “ You’re lucky you didn’t get in here with him, Malcolm. He’s the noisiest brute when he’s asleep I ever heard.”

“ I don’t believe it! ” said Rob indignantly. “ I never hear a sound! ”

“ Because you’re making too much noise.”

“ He’s probably inventing things in his sleep,” Malcolm laughed from the doorway. “ Good-night.”

“ Good-night. By the way, Doc says we must be careful about fires up there, because things are so dry. Guess he’s afraid you’ll burn the old mountain down, Mal. Well, see you in the morning.”

When morning came, and when Evan, after lying half awake for a time with the consciousness of being disagreeably chilly, finally dropped himself on his elbow and glanced toward the windows, it seemed that the weather didn’t approve of the expedition, for the morning world was gray and damp and cold. The wind was blowing out of the east and a thin fog drifted in from the bay. Evan fumbled for his watch and found that it was time to get up. But the idea of arising in his pajamas

and putting down the window did n't appeal to him, so he huddled himself under the blanket again and called to Rob.

“ O Rob! Time to get up! ”

There was no answer from across the room, however, and Evan tried again.

“ O Rob! Get up, you lazy beggar, and close the window! ”

There was a grunt and Rob flopped over and flattened himself out more comfortably, with his face buried in his arm.

Evan threw a pillow across, but missed. A second landed on Rob's head, but only drew a grunt.

“ Sluggard! ” muttered Evan contemptuously.

With both pillows gone he could no longer be comfortable, and so, after a minute's hesitation, he scrambled out of bed and dashed across to the window and sent it down with a crash loud enough to awaken anybody but Rob. Shivering, Evan got some of his clothes on. Then he pulled blanket and sheet from the slumberer and gleefully watched results. Rob drew his legs up with a protesting murmur and sleepily groped for the bed-clothes. Not finding them, he opened one eye and discovered his

plight. Then he opened the other eye and regarded Evan blinkingly.

“ Huh? ” he muttered inquiringly.

“ Get up,” said Evan sternly.

“ Huh? ” Rob’s eyes closed slowly.

“ Get up, you silly chump. Don’t you know you’re freezing? ”

“ Yes, I — know.” Rob made a supreme effort and turned over. “ What time is it? ”

Evan told him. “ And look at the weather,” he added. “ Is n’t it rank? ”

Rob cast an uninterested glance toward the windows and then sighed and arose.

“ Gee, but it’s cold! ” he muttered as he went over and regarded the gray and misty landscape. “ What rotten weather,” he sighed. “ Still, it’s mostly fog and maybe it will burn off before long.”

“ I suppose we might leave our climb for another day,” Evan suggested.

“ Oh, this is n’t bad. I rather like a cloudy day. Besides, it will be cooler, and climbing that old hill is rather warm work.”

“ Thought you did n’t want to go.”

“ Well, when I once make up my mind that a thing has to be done,” responded Rob as he splashed and spluttered over the basin, “ I like

to do it and get it over with. Br-r-rr! This water feels as though it had ice in it. . . . Besides, Mal would be disappointed."

"All right; I'm game," Evan assented.

They were ready to start shortly after nine. Malcolm had secured his provisions and had discovered a potato-sack in the cellar. This he cut into three squares. Then he divided the load and wrapped the portions up in the pieces of sacking. These were tied to the shoulders of the three members of the expedition with pieces of twine. As they started off towards the Doctor's cottage they created quite a sensation among the fellows they met and were the recipients of many inquiries, while humorous comments on their appearance were not wanting. Mr. George Washington Jell hailed them from the steps of Academy and hurried after them.

"Where are you fellows going?" he asked.

"Up Graytop?"

"We are," replied Rob soberly.

"Let me go, will you, Rob?"

"No, Jelly, I will not."

"Oh, go ahead! Why not?"

"Because I have some consideration for your welfare, Jelly. You'd be just skin and

bones by the time you got to the top — if you ever did! And besides, I have troubles of my own, Jelly, and can't stop to pull you over the rocks or carry you in my arms when you get tired."

"I won't get tired, honest, Rob. I'm a dandy climber!"

"You look it," laughed Malcolm.

"You don't mind if I go, do you?" asked Jelly, turning his attention eagerly to Malcolm.

"Indeed I do, Jelly. You see, we have only an ordinary amount of food with us, and either you'd starve or we would."

"If you'll just walk slow I'll run back and get some more," said Jelly. "It won't take me but a mniute. Go on, Rob, let me go along."

Rob looked inquiringly at Malcolm and Evan. Evan laughed.

"Let him come, Rob," he said. "The more the merrier. But he *will* have to get some more grub."

"We-ll," began Rob. But Jelly was already hurrying back toward the kitchen. "I suppose we might as well take him," said Rob. "He's a decent chap. But he will be just about

all in by the time he gets up. We'll go ahead slow and let him catch up to us."

But by the time they had reached the first ascent it was evident that if they were to have the pleasure of Mr. Jell's society on the climb they would have to wait for him. So they perched themselves on top of the stone wall that divides the school property from the woods and waited.

"Let's cut some sticks," suggested Malcolm. "They help a lot until you get to the rocks."

"Right you are," Rob agreed. "We must have some alpen-stocks. Who's got a good strong knife?"

Evan supplied that article, and they set out in search of suitable branches for their purpose. By the time they had cut and trimmed four stout sticks Jelly was in sight, toiling breathlessly up the slope with a package wrapped in a flapping newspaper in one hand. When he reached them he was so out of breath that they mercifully perched themselves on the wall again and allowed him to recuperate.

"All I could get," panted Jelly, "was bread and potatoes and six raw eggs. Cook was grumpy as she could be. Said she'd given out

all the food she was going to. Said somebody had helped himself to a lot of crullers from the pastry-room."

Malcolm looked idly at the sky and hummed a song.

"I thought they were doughnuts," murmured Rob.

"It was extremely thoughtless of 'someone,'" said Evan. "I hope you like eggs and potatoes, Jelly. You must be a vegetarian."

"No, he's a Presbyterian; aren't you, Jelly?" said Rob.

"Don't you worry about me," answered Jelly with a grin. "I swiped a pair of chops when cook wasn't looking. I *think* they're veal."

"A pair!" laughed Malcolm. "How do you know they're a pair? Wouldn't it be awful if you'd got two rights or two lefts, Jelly?"

"Let us hope they're not veal," said Rob gravely, "because you have to bread veal chops and serve them with tomato sauce, and our culinary arrangements are extremely limited."

"It was very, very wrong of you," observed Malcolm sternly, "to steal chops from dear cook. I wouldn't be at all surprised if you choked yourself on the bones."

“Aren’t any bones,” replied Jelly triumphantly. “They’re all meat. Besides, you swiped the crullers.”

“Not at all,” answered Malcolm calmly. “The crullers were lying there in a big pan and I merely helped myself to our share instead of waiting until dinner-time.”

“Well, I just took my chops instead of waiting,” responded Jelly.

“I have a feeling;” said Rob, “that this excursion is going to end in disaster. The presence of a thief in our midst will certainly work us ill. However, as I am particularly fond of eggs, Jelly, we won’t send you back. You may come along if you will promise never to steal a pair of veal chops again. And now, if you have sufficiently recovered your breath, we will proceed. Where’s my alpen-stock? Ah, here it is. I love my little alpen-stock.”

It was not hard work for the first quarter of a mile, for the ascent through the maple woods was easy and there was a well-defined path to follow. The path led around the right elbow of the hill and in the course of time reached the summit from the farther side. But to make the ascent by the path was not considered “sporty” at Riverport, and presently, when

the maples had given place to black and yellow birches and oaks and ashes, Malcolm, who was in the lead, swung away from the path and started almost straight up the mountain. The alpen-stocks proved their value now and it was n't long before the four boys were puffing like porpoises and the muscles of their legs were protesting vehemently. Jelly was soon occupying a position well in the rear, the perspiration trickling down his face and the sound of his breathing reaching the others like the exhaust of the steam pump in the boiler house at school. He held his precious parcel of rations in one hand and used his stick with the other, and there were times when he wished heartily for a third. The clouds still hid the sun, but the morning had grown warmer, and here in the woods what breeze there was failed to penetrate. Suddenly there was a cry of dismay from Jelly and the others turned anxiously.

“ What’s the matter? ” called Evan.

Jelly, some twenty yards down the slope, was dimly visible through the trees. He was stooping over his bundle and pulling the paper away with frantic anxiety.

“ Anything wrong? ” called Rob.

“ Wrong! ” shouted Jelly at last in a despairing voice. “ My bundle’s leaking! I’ve lost both chops and two eggs and a whole lot of potatoes! ”

CHAPTER VIII

ON TABLE ROCK

A HOWL of laughter arose from Rob and Evan and Malcolm. Jelly peered up at them disgustedly.

“ I don’t see anything to laugh at ! ” he cried. “ All I’ve got left is two eggs and three potatoes ! ”

“ That’s enough for anybody,” answered Malcolm. Rob had seated himself on a tree-root and was laughing helplessly.

“ I’m going back to look for them,” called Jelly. “ You fellows wait. Don’t you run off and leave me, now ! ”

“ We won’t,” gurgled Rob. “ But — but get a move on ! ”

“ Poor Jelly,” chuckled Evan. “ He’s nearly dead already. If he can’t find his ‘ pair of chops,’ Malcolm, have we got enough for him to eat ? ”

“ Nobody ever had enough for Jelly to eat

yet," answered Rob, wiping his eyes on his sleeve.

"There'll be enough at a pinch," Malcolm replied. "Personally I'm not sorry to get a chance to sit down a moment. This is something of a climb, is n't it?"

"You bet it is," replied Evan, following the example of the others and seating himself with a sigh. "How much further is it?"

"We've done about half," Malcolm answered, "but the rest of the trip is the hardest. What time is it, I wonder?"

It was twenty minutes to eleven.

"Time enough," muttered Rob, leaning back against a tree, "if Jelly does n't delay the game too long. Is n't he funny with his 'pair of chops?'"

"There he comes, I think," said Evan. "I hear something down there. O Jelly!"

"Hello!"

"Did you find 'em?"

"Yes, most of them," was the faint reply. After another minute Jelly appeared below. Stopping to recover his parcel, he toiled up to them, his face as red as a beet and the perspiration running down his cheeks. He sank to the ground and puffed and panted.

“ I found the chops,” he said. “ And six — potatoes — but the eggs — were — smashed.”

“ Did n’t you recover any of them? ” asked Rob solicitously.

“ If you want them — you can — go back and — get them,” Jelly retorted with a grin. He pulled the parcel to him, threw back the paper and exposed his treasures; nine small potatoes, two eggs, two slices of buttered bread and two pink chops covered with dirt and leaves. Jelly took up the chops and lovingly cleaned them while the others looked on laughing.

“ They’re perfectly good chops,” asserted Jelly, faintly indignant.

“ Of course they are,” answered Rob soothingly. “ A few leaves and a little dirt will give them a fine, gamey flavor. They look like mutton to me, Jelly.”

Jelly held one to his nose and sniffed it critically.

“ N—no, I think they ’re veal,” he replied gravely. “ I wish these eggs were hard boiled; then they would n’t have broken.”

“ So do I,” said Rob. “ I only allowed you to come, Jelly, because I am extremely fond of

eggs. And now you have only half an excuse for your presence."

"Say, Jelly," Malcolm suggested, "you'd better stuff that truck in your pockets. Then you won't lose it."

"Guess I will," muttered Jelly. He wrapped the chops tenderly in a piece of the newspaper and then distributed his rations about him. "Now," he said, "it won't be so hard to climb."

"Well, let's get on then," said Rob. "I used to think, fellows, that I'd like to be a Swiss mountaineer and leap from crag to crag and yodel merrily in my glee, but I've changed my mind. Where's my — Thank you, Evan. As I said before, I love my little alpenstock."

A quarter of an hour later they left the trees behind them and found themselves on a rocky slope sparsely grown with low bushes and tough, wiry grass. Here the sticks were no longer of use and they discarded them. Boulders and stones made progress slow and uncertain, and several times they had to climb on hands and knees up the face of some bare ledge. This was hard work for Jelly, and near the summit they were forced to stop and allow him

to recover. A final scramble along the side of Table Rock and they were on top, breathless and weary but triumphant.

On all sides the country was visible for miles, although the mist to-day hid the further distances. South-eastward Narragansett Bay stretched out to the Sound, dully blue. White sails appeared here and there, and a steamer was making its way westward with a dark streak of smoke trailing ahead. The school buildings, directly below, looked no larger than cigar-boxes. Northward the country stretched away in wooded hills and meadows, sprinkled with farms and tiny white houses. Riverport was like a toy village and only a haze of smoke told where Providence lay at the head of the bay. Lake Matunuxet wound its long length toward the west like a wide blue-gray ribbon. The roads were buff scratches that dipped and turned across the green and russet landscape. The distant screech of a locomotive drew their eyes to where a freight train crawled along the edge of the bay beyond Riverport.

“ It ’s a dandy view, is n’t it? ” asked Evan, who had seated himself on the edge of the great flat ledge with his legs hanging over a sixty-foot drop.

“ Yes, but it ’s all-fired cold,” answered Rob. “ Let ’s get over on the other side and start a fire. I ’m hungry enough to eat Jelly’s dirty chops.”

The wind which, since they had left the protection of the trees, had been growing stronger each moment, blew coldly from the water. Overhead the clouds were drifting fast, and now and then a faint yellow radiance momentarily gave promise of sunlight. The others were glad to follow Rob’s suggestion. The ledge sloped westward to a litter of giant boulders and slabs, and among these there were traces of many former fires. The boys set about collecting wood: small branches of bushes and the remains of previous stores. Malcolm viewed the result dubiously.

“ This is n’t going to be nearly enough fuel, fellows,” he said. “ Somebody will have to go down and get some more.”

Rob looked interestedly at the distant hills. Jelly continued emptying the treasures from his pockets into a crevice in the rock. Evan looked thoughtfully at the pile of wood.

“ How far do we have to go? ” he asked.

“ Down to the trees. It ’s not so far on this side. You and I will go, Evan, and leave these

lazy duffers to start the fire. I want a good big bed of coals to cook on."

"All right," said Evan, "but let's wait a few minutes more. Gee, I haven't really got my breath back yet."

"I wish you'd let me go," murmured Rob. "What a beautiful view it is, to be sure."

"I'd go for wood," said Jelly earnestly, "but I'm pretty tuckered, Malcolm. I suppose it's being so fleshy that —"

"You're not fleshy," said Rob, "you're *fat*, Jelly. Fleshy is much too polite a name for your trouble."

"Never mind," said Malcolm. "You sit down and get rested, Jelly. At least, you had the decency to *offer* to go, which is more than I can say for somebody."

"I believe you are insinuating, Malcolm Warne! Your words and manner are alike insulting. I challenge you to mortal combat, up here above the clouds." Rob picked up Jelly's two precious eggs. "Behold the weapons! Eggs *au naturel*, at a distance of forty paces!"

"Here, you put those down, Rob!" shrieked Jelly in alarm.

"I shall be glad to put them down when they're cooked, Mr. Jell."

“ Please don’t break them,” begged Jelly.
“ Malcolm, make him let my eggs alone.”

“ That ’s right, Rob. If you must play with those do it over the frying-pan so they won’t be wasted. Let ’s go down and get the wood, Evan. How about it — rested enough? ”

“ Yes, I ’m ready.”

“ Just to show you that you have misjudged me sadly,” said Rob, “ I will go along and help. You start the fire, Jelly, and keep it going until we get back with more supplies.”

CHAPTER IX

DINNER IS SERVED

MALCOLM pointed out the "stove," a hollow between three big ragged boulders, already blackened by former fires, and Jelly set to work to pile the fuel there. The others climbed cautiously down the ledge and stumbled and scrambled their way to the tree line. Once there, fuel was plentiful, but it was no easy task to make the ascent again with one's arms piled with splintered branches. They made two trips, however, and assembled a fine big pile of wood on the surface of the ledge. After that they laid themselves down flat on their backs and puffed and panted like three steam-engines. The fire was crackling and Jelly was feeding it assiduously. The sparks, driven by the wind, went flying over the edge of the ledge in a shower of orange and red.

"Have a look at this, will you, Malcolm," called Jelly. "I guess I've got enough coals for you now."

Malcolm pronounced the fire about ready for operations, and gave his attention to the provisions. There was steak in two big slices, plenty of potatoes for roasting, buttered rolls and a full dozen and a half of doughnuts. There was ground coffee and an egg for clearing it, and salt and pepper, sugar and condensed milk. The utensils included coffee-pot, frying-pan, tin plates and cups, forks, knives and spoons. Rob viewed the display approvingly.

“ Looks good to me,” he said. “ But your frying-pan is n’t big enough, Mal.”

“ Well, I did n’t want to bother with a very large one. This will do all right. We can cook one slice at a time. Where ’s the coffee-pot? Throw it over, will you? I ’ll start the coffee first, I guess. I ’ll — ”

Malcolm stopped suddenly while an expression of utter dismay came into his face.

“ What ’s the trouble? ” asked Evan. Malcolm settled back on the ground and stared blankly at the coffee-pot.

“ I — we — ”

“ Out with it. What did we forget to bring along? ”

“ We forgot to bring any water,” murmured Malcolm.

“ By Jove! ” said Evan.

“ What do you think of that? ” muttered Rob disgustedly. The three looked at each other blankly. Finally,

“ How far is it to the spring? ” asked Evan.

“ It ’s almost half-way down the hill,” answered Malcolm.

“ Thunder! ”

“ I don’t see how you came to forget it,” exclaimed Rob.

“ I did n’t forget it any more than you did,” Malcolm defended.

“ Oh, let ’s do without coffee,” said Evan.

“ I guess we ’ll have to,” Malcolm answered. “ I don’t believe any of us want to make the trip down there.”

“ I ’m plumb sure I don’t,” growled Rob. “ But we ’ve simply got to have something to drink. Hang it, I ’m thirsty now! I did n’t realize it until I found there was no water.”

Jelly had joined them in time to learn the catastrophe.

“ I ’ll go down,” he said cheerfully. “ I know where the spring is; been there twice.”

The others viewed him doubtfully, and then each other. Finally Rob shook his head.

“ That ’s nice of you, Jelly,” he said, “ but

you 'd die if you climbed half-way up here again. I 'll go down myself."

"No, I will," said Malcolm. "After all, it was more my fault than any one else's."

"I 'd be glad to go if I knew where the spring was," said Evan. "Perhaps you can tell me so I can find it." But Rob shook his head again.

"We could n't. I 'll go down. I don't mind. You go ahead with dinner, Mal. I 'll be back as soon as I can, but I guess it will take me a half-hour."

"Really," protested Jelly, "I 'd like to go. It won't hurt me a bit if I take my time coming back. And besides, I want to get my weight down. Hopkins says I 'm too fat for football. Where 's the can? "

"Haven't any; you 'll have to take the coffee-pot. Are you sure you don't mind? " asked Malcolm anxiously.

"Sure. I 'd rather like it. Let me go, won't you, Rob? "

"Why, yes, if you want to. But you take it slow coming back, Jelly; hear? "

Jelly promised, seized the coffee-pot and disappeared over the edge. The others watched him until he had reached the woods. There he

turned and waved the pot at them cheerfully. The next moment he was out of sight.

“He ’s a good little dub,” said Rob gratefully. “I suppose I ought to have done it myself, though.”

“It won’t hurt him,” said Malcolm. “And it *will* take some fat off, I guess. Well, I suppose I might as well get the potatoes in.”

“Hello,” exclaimed Rob, “what ’s happened to the wind?”

“That ’s so; it ’s quit, has n’t it?” Evan looked down into the valley. “And it ’s getting foggy. Look over there toward the bay, Rob.”

“I should say so! I bet it will rain before we get back.”

“Hope it will hold off until we ’ve had dinner,” observed Malcolm. “I don’t fancy sitting up here in a rain with nothing over us.”

“I don’t believe that means rain,” said Evan. “It ’s just fog. The wind has stopped and it ’s sort of thickening up.”

“You talk like a weather bureau,” laughed Rob. “Anything I can do to aid the chef, Mal?”

“Not a thing. These potatoes will want a half-hour at least, I guess. Meanwhile we might as well take it easy.” He found a niche

in the rocks and settled himself into it with a sigh of content. The others followed his example. Now and then Malcolm arose and added more fuel to the fire, at the bottom of which, in a bed of glowing gray ashes, the potatoes were hidden. They talked desultorily. It was very comfortable lying there and watching the fire. Now that the wind had died down it was quite warm, although there was a perceptible dampness in the air. At the end of a half-hour Malcolm bestirred himself. Taking a stick and shielding his face with his cap he poked around in the ashes until he had brought to view one of the potatoes. He coaxed it away from the fire and then broke it open.

“How is it?” asked Rob lazily.

“Pretty nearly done,” was the answer. “I’ll start the steak, I guess.” He raked some live coals to the edge of the fire, placed one of the slices of steak in the pan, sprinkled it with salt and pepper and placed the pan on the coals. Then he drew more coals around it and set about sharpening a two-foot stick.

“What’s that for?” asked Evan.

“To turn the meat with,” was the reply. “Think I want to singe my hair off?”

“Isn’t he the haughty chef?” murmured

Rob. "Seems to me it 's about time Jelly was getting back."

Evan arose and walked to the edge of the rock.

"See him?" asked Malcolm.

"N—no, but it 's so foggy that I can't even see the trees," Evan replied. "Yes, I do, though. Here he comes. Hello, Jelly!"

"Hello!"

"Did you get it?"

"Yep. Would you mind coming down and getting it, please? I don't believe I 'll ever climb up the rock without spilling it."

"All right." Evan scrambled down and met Jelly at the foot of the ledge and relieved him of his burden.

"You would n't think a quart of water could be so heavy," panted Jelly. "You see, you have to hold it like this or it runs out the spout. That makes it awkward, does n't it?"

"Decidedly," answered Evan. "I don't know whether I can get it up there myself without losing most of it."

But he did finally, and a minute or two later the coffee was "on the stove." Jelly was pretty well fagged out and they made him lie down and rest. From the frying-pan came a

heartening sizzle and, now and then, a fragrant whiff.

“ May I cook my chops next? ” asked Jelly.

“ You may not,” Malcolm replied. “ You just lie there on your silly back. I ’ll cook them for you. You can start in on the steak, though, while they ’re frying. Wonder if those potatoes are ready to come out.”

“ Well, if I ’d been in there as long as they have,” said Evan, “ I ’m sure I ’d be ready to come out! Want me to help you? ”

“ Yes, will you? Get a long stick and poke around for them. But don’t get too near the coffee-pot, whatever you do! ”

“ No, Evan, if you upset that coffee-pot we will descend upon you and rend you limb from limb,” threatened Rob. “ I ’m so thirsty now that I could drink suds. Are these tin cups all the same size, Mal? ”

“ Of course. Why? ”

“ I was going to pick out the biggest one,” sighed Rob. “ How are the potatoes, Evan? ”

“ All right, I guess. They look — er — a trifle well-done, but I suppose they ’re all right inside. Want to see one? ”

Rob deftly caught the blackened object that Evan tossed him but did n’t hold it long in his

hand. “Wow!” he exclaimed. “Want to kill me?”

“Get your plates!” said Malcolm. “Dinner’s ready!”

CHAPTER X

STORIES AND SLUMBER

THAT dinner was worth waiting for, worth all the trouble and weariness it had entailed. They sat around the smoldering fire, balancing tin plates on their knees, with cups of steaming hot coffee and buttered rolls and doughnuts and salt and pepper-boxes dotting the immediate landscape, and did full justice to it. Malcolm's opinion of his culinary ability was justified by results. The steak was just right, Jelly's chops were cooked to a turn, the two precious eggs were perfectly fried and the coffee — well, perhaps the coffee was a trifle muddy, but it was hot and it was drinkable and there were no criticisms. The potatoes belied their outward appearance and were surprisingly white and mealy when opened. Jelly had forgotten to provide himself with plate, cup, knife, fork or spoon and ate his dinner from a flat stone, using borrowed implements and his

fingers by turns. Malcolm shared his tin cup with him.

“ Have a piece of chop, Rob? ” asked Jelly.

“ No, thanks.”

“ I wish you would. I had some of your steak.”

“ What kind of chops are they? ”

“ I — I think they ’re veal. Anyhow, there is n’t much taste to them.”

“ Then of course they ’re veal,” laughed Malcolm. “ Evan, I ’ll bet you did n’t get all the potatoes out; we ’re shy four or five.”

“ Here ’s one if you want it. I got all I could find. How ’s the coffee holding out, Rob? ”

Rob seized the pot and shook it.

“ Plenty here, I guess. Pass your cup.”

“ It ’s always well to shake it about a bit,” said Malcolm dryly. “ It makes it so nice and clear.”

“ Oh, don’t be so fussy. Any one seen the canned cow? *And* the sugar? Thanks. Jelly, you got my spoon? ”

“ Yes, I ’m eating egg with it. Want it? ”

“ Well, scarcely,” replied Evan. “ Let me take yours, Rob. These are dandy doughnuts, fellows.”

“ They ’re crullers,” said Jelly indistinctly by reason of the crowded condition of his mouth. “ Cook said so.”

“ What ’s the difference between a cruller and a doughnut, anyway? ” asked Evan.

“ A doughnut is a cruller with a hole through it,” answered Malcolm.

“ It ’s a doughnut with a college education,” amended Rob.

“ That ’s an old one,” scoffed Malcolm.

“ Doughnuts and crullers are just the same,” said Jelly. “ It just depends where they live what they ’re called. In some places they call them fried-cakes.”

“ Well, I call them fine,” said Evan, biting into his second one. “ A cruller by any other name would taste as good.”

“ Suppose you toss a couple over here,” suggested Malcolm, “ if you don’t want them all.”

“ I do want them all,” was the reply, “ but being generous I will allow you one.”

“ You ’ll allow me a couple more presently,” responded Malcolm. “ Say, I should think there would be a big waste in making them this way; with holes in the middle, I mean.”

“ Waste? Why? ” asked Rob.

“ Well, what becomes of the piece that ’s cut out? ”

The others laughed and Malcolm looked surprised.

“ What ’s the joke? ”

“ Why, they take the dough that ’s cut out and make more crullers, you idiot,” said Rob. Malcolm considered a moment.

“ Oh,” he said. “ I never thought of that. I had an idea they threw that away.”

“ Was n’t there a story,” asked Evan, “ about a man who got it into his head that if he could make the holes in doughnuts larger he ’d make more money on them? ”

“ There was — and is,” answered Rob gravely. “ There is also a conundrum about the reason why a miller wears a white hat. But if you had any respect for age you ’d let them both alone.”

“ Say, Rob,” said Jelly, “ I should think you’d invent a cruller with a little box in the middle to hold raspberry jam. That would be swell, would n’t it? ”

“ Why raspberry? ” asked Evan.

“ Oh, I like raspberry best,” answered Jelly calmly. “ In that way you ’d be economizing space, Rob. It always make me feel

badly to see all that empty place in the middle."

"Well, you won't have any empty place in your middle," said Rob scathingly. "No wonder you're fat, Jelly."

Mr. George Washington Jell sighed comfortably. "Well," he replied, "I'd rather be a little bit fat and have enough to eat, Rob."

"How about football, though?" asked Malcolm. "I thought you told us that Hopkins thinks you're too fat?"

"Oh, I'll soon train down," answered Jelly, reaching for another doughnut. "In a week or two I'll be twelve pounds lighter."

"Mercy!" Rob held up his hands in awe. "Why, we'll hardly know you! Think of Jelly losing twelve pounds, fellows!"

"Twelve pounds of Jelly," murmured Malcolm. "You'll be a regular skeleton, Jelly."

"You'll get rid of another pound or two going down the mountain," observed Evan.

"Mal, did I ever tell you about a fellow I knew back home who had a cocker spaniel?" asked Rob.

"No, I don't think so. What about him?"

"Well, it was a fine dog and he wanted to enter him at the dog show." Rob pushed his

tin plate aside and stretched himself comfortably. "But when he had the dog weighed he was eight pounds too heavy. The show was to open the next morning and he did n't know what to do. He tried starving the dog and in the evening he weighed him again, but he was still seven and a half pounds too heavy."

"This is a pathetic tale," muttered Malcolm.

"Well, he did n't know what to do — "

"You said that before, Rob."

"But he had an idea. He remembered that once he had seen a chap wrapped up in sweaters running along the road getting his weight down. So this chap, whose name was — "

"Smith," suggested Evan.

"Shut up. His name was Jones. So Jones decided that if that would work with a man it ought to work with a dog. So after dinner he wrapped the dog — "

"What was the dog's name?" asked Jelly.

"Smith," said Evan again.

"The dog's name was — was — I don't remember."

"That's a crazy name," commented Malcolm. "Why did n't he call him I-Don't-Care? "

"Say, do you want to hear this story or

don't you? " Rob demanded. They assured him that they did. " Well, shut up, then! Smith wrapped the dog in a big woolen sweater — "

" Jones, you mean."

" No, the dog," answered Rob irritably. " I mean Jones wrapped — "

" Smith," said Evan.

" Wrapped the dog in a sweater and started out with him on a leash."

" On a what? " asked Malcolm politely.

" On a leash; the dog was on a leash."

" Oh! What was Smith on? "

Rob found the remains of a baked potato within reach and scored against Malcolm's neck. While the latter was wiping away the fragments Rob went on.

" Well, he walked that dog and walked him. Took him away out into the country and back again into town; pulled him all around the city; dragged him eight times up and down the City Hall steps. By that time it was about two in the morning, and Jones — "

" Smith," corrected Evan helpfully.

" And Smith — hang it, his name was Jones, I tell you! Jones was pretty nearly dead for sleep. He 'd taken naps as he went along. Finally he came to a lunch-wagon and went in

and got a cup of coffee. He gave some of it to the dog — ”

“ Oh, come now ! ” Evan protested. “ Dogs don’t drink coffee ! ”

“ This dog was very fond of coffee,” replied Rob with dignity.

“ Of course,” agreed Malcolm. “ Did you hear Rob say he was a coffee spaniel ? ”

“ Well, that woke them both up and they went on walking.”

“ Say, for goodness sake, Rob, get through walking ! ” begged Malcolm. “ My legs are just aching already. Have them sit down for a minute, won’t you ? ”

“ He walked that dog around until four o’clock in the morning,” declared Rob impressively, “ and when he got him home he put him on the scales, and what do you think ? ”

“ He ’d gained another eight pounds,” said Evan.

“ There was’n’t anything left but the collar,” guessed Jelly.

“ No, but that dog had lost eight pounds exactly and was half a pound under the limit ! What do you think of that ? ”

“ I ’d rather not tell you,” answered Malcolm evasively.

“ And did he win a prize with him? ” asked Jelly? ”

“ N—no, he did n’t. You see, when he took him around to the show he found that he had walked two inches off the dog’s legs and they made him enter him as a dachshund.”

There was a deep and painful silence. Then Malcolm began to whistle softly and Evan reached out for the last doughnut and tossed it into Rob’s lap.

“ You win,” he said.

That reminded Jelly of a story that he had heard his father tell. Moreover, he assured them seriously, it was a *true* story.

“ Well,” sighed Rob, “ go ahead with it and get it off your mind.”

Whether it was true or not, it was very long and somewhat complicated and the audience soon gave up trying to follow its intricacies. Rob went to sleep and snored shamelessly. This annoyed Jelly and he lost connection.

“ And so — and so — Where was I? ”

“ The druggist was just filling the prescription,” replied Evan.

“ Whereupon,” murmured Malcolm sleepily, “ the goat climbed on to the counter and ate up the nail-files, shrieking in a high falsetto voice,

‘ Death to tyrants ! ’ But see, who comes here ? Ah, ’tis our hero ! Vaulting nimbly upon the back of his restless steed Diamond Dick Tolliver drew his trusty bean-shooter and waving it above his head cried — ”

“ Oh, shut up, Malcolm ! Can’t you let me tell my story ? ”

“ Proceed,” breathed Malcolm sweetly.

“ Wake me when you ’re through, Jelly.”

So Jelly went on. Ten minutes later he paused at the climax of his narrative.

“ What do you think of that ? ” he asked beamingly. There was no reply. His three auditors were sound asleep. Jelly viewed them disgustedly one after another. Then he lay down on his back, put an arm under his head and followed the general example.

CHAPTER XI

JELLY CLIMBS A TREE

EVAN was the first to awake. For some time he had been dimly conscious of discomfort. The rocks were very hard and there was a chilliness in the air that sent his thoughts groping sleepily toward the fire. But when he sat up stiffly and looked for the fire he saw only a pile of ashes and cinders from which a few curls of smoke arose. Then he looked about him in surprise. The world was shut out by a great gray fog. Even the farther edge of the rock, only some forty feet distant, was scarcely discernible. He drew his hand along his sleeve and found that his clothes were saturated with moisture. He awakened the others and it was agreed that it was time to be going.

“We must be in a cloud,” said Malcolm. But Rob declared that they weren’t high enough to get into clouds.

“It’s just a plain every-day fog,” he said. “But it’s certainly a wonder. What time is it? Who’s got a watch?”

“Two twenty-three,” replied Evan. “I’ll have to hurry or I won’t get down in time for football practice.”

“Me too,” said Jelly. “Let’s get the things packed up and start.”

“Wish that fire had n’t gone out,” growled Rob, shivering in his wet clothes as he helped the others collect the tin dinner service. “I feel like a clam.”

“I say nothing of how you look,” remarked Malcolm pleasantly. “Where’s that other piece of sacking? And where’s the string got to?”

“Blown away, probably,” said Evan. “Why not put all the things into one bundle and take turns carrying it? It won’t be very heavy, anyhow.”

So that was done and presently they were scrambling down over the edge of Table Rock to the boulder-littered slope below. The fog hid objects forty feet away and presently Rob gave voice to a thought which had occurred to all of them.

“I guess we’ll have to trust to luck to find the path,” he said. “But we’re bound to come to it if we keep on going down hill.”

“ We ’ll find the bottom, all right,” answered Malcolm, “ although we may not arrive just where we want to.”

“ I don’t see how we can fail to find the path,” said Evan. “ And when we come to it all we have to do is to follow it down.”

“ There ’s the edge of the trees,” remarked Rob. “ Is n’t that spring right here somewhere, Mal? ”

“ Further down and a bit to the left. Want some water? ”

“ Yes, I ’m as dry as the dickens. Let ’s have a look for it.”

“ All right. I could drink a quart or two myself.”

But when they were in the thin woods and, after descending for what seemed the proper distance, had turned to the left, it became evident that finding the spring was not going to be an easy task. After some ten minutes of prospecting along the slope Evan advised giving over the search.

“ Let ’s get home, fellows,” he said. “ It ’s getting late, and we may have to hunt here for an hour.”

“ I guess that ’s so,” Rob agreed. “ We ’ll suffer the pangs of thirst a while longer. Let ’s

make a bee-line down the hill and find the path."

When one's legs are stiff from climbing up hill the worst punishment one can inflict on them is to require them to take one down again. Theoretically, descending a mountain should be as easy as rolling off the proverbial log. Actually, it is almost as hard on the muscles as going up. Jelly was the first to protest.

"I've got to sit down a moment, fellows," he declared, suiting the action to the word. "My legs are nearly killing me."

"It's not a bad scheme," said Rob, finding a place on a dead log. "Who wants to carry the luggage a while?"

"I'll take it," said Evan. "We ought to be pretty near the path, had n't we?"

"Yes," replied Malcolm. "I thought we'd have reached it before this. But it can't be far away."

But when they resumed their journey the path remained elusive. They went down for another ten minutes, dodging between trees, sliding and slipping down the slope, tripping over roots and snags and forcing their way through the young growth. At last Rob stopped, clinging to a sapling, and surveyed

the tiny space about them left visible by the fog.

“ There ’s one thing certain,” he said, “ and that is that we ’ve gone by the path. We ’re in the maples now.”

“ That ’s so,” Malcolm agreed, “ but I don’t see how we missed it. I ’ve been watching for it all the way down.”

“ It would n’t be hard to miss, I guess,” ventured Jelly. “ It is n’t much of a path even when you ’re on it.”

“ No, and we ’ve probably crossed right over without seeing it at all. Well, the only thing to do is to keep on down and see where we land.”

“ How much more is there, do you suppose? ” asked Evan rather dubiously.

“ Oh, a quarter of a mile, likely. It won’t take long. Give me that bundle of tin-ware, Evan.”

Evan surrendered the load to Malcolm and they went on again. But it was slow work, for the trees were thick and the undergrowth often made detours necessary. Finally they rested again and Jelly set to work vigorously rubbing his leg muscles.

“ You know,” remarked Rob calmly, “ the

plain fact of the matter is, fellows, that we 're plumb lost."

The others nodded.

"Lost as anything," said Malcolm. "Still, we 're bound to get down finally."

"Seems to me we 're about down now," said Evan. "The ground is pretty nearly level, is n't it?"

"That 's so," Rob replied. "We stopped coming down hill two or three minutes ago. In that case we 're nowhere near school."

"Must be over to the north, then," said Malcolm thoughtfully. "We sort of got off our bearings, I reckon, when we went to look for that silly spring."

"Wish I could see it now, though," said Rob, running his tongue over parched lips. "I 'm beastly thirsty."

"So am I," said Jelly sadly. "I wish I were home."

"Well!" Evan arose energetically. "Let 's get home. There 's no use sitting here. I feel as though I 'd taken a shower bath. Every thing I 've got on is sopping wet."

"This is the foggiest old fog I ever did see," grumbled Rob. "Come along, Jelly. I told you fellows when we started out that something

unpleasant would happen to us if we took such a dishonest person as Jelly along. He 's our Jonah."

" I guess I 'm not getting any more fun out of it than you are," grunted Jelly crossly as he arose painfully and limped after them. Ten minutes later there was a shout from Evan, who had taken the lead.

" What is it? " asked Rob eagerly.

" Here 's a field," was the answer. They had at last emerged from the woods, but Rob and Malcolm viewed each other questioningly.

" Where do you suppose we are? " asked Rob. Malcolm shook his head.

" I don't know. This is n't the meadow back of school because there 's no stone wall here. What I think is that we 've got around to the north side of the mountain, toward Hillsgrove, you know. They say that in the woods you always unconsciously bear to the left."

" If this old fog would only get out," said Evan. They moved undecidedly into the field and in a moment the woods had vanished from sight behind them.

" What time is it? " asked Rob.

" Almost four," Malcolm replied.

“ *What?* ”

“ That ’s right,” Evan confirmed, glancing at his own watch. “ No football for us to-day, Jelly.”

“ Glad of it,” answered Jelly morosely. “ I could n’t play football if my life depended on it.”

“ Pshaw, they would n’t hold practice a day like this,” said Rob. “ Why, you could n’t see the ball twenty feet away. What time did we leave up there, Mal? ”

“ About half-past two.”

“ Great Scott! We ’ve been wandering around this fool mountain for an hour and a half! No wonder I ’m tired! Does anybody know where we are headed for now? ”

Apparently no one did.

“ Seems to me,” said Malcolm, “ we ’d better strike off to the right.”

“ Well, the fog on the right looks just as nice as that on the left,” answered Rob philosophically. “ Come on. Perhaps, though, we ’d have done better to have followed the edge of the woods.”

“ That ’s so,” Evan agreed. “ Let ’s do that.”

“ First find your woods,” said Malcolm.

“ They ’re right back there,” said Evan, pointing.

“ Get out! They ’re off there! ” And Rob indicated a different point of the compass. Malcolm shrugged his shoulders.

“ I guess we won’t look for them,” he said dryly. “ Come on and let ’s hit up the pace. At least we ’ve got level ground to walk on, and that ’s something.”

“ It may be level,” Jelly muttered from the rear, “ but it ’s mighty wet. My feet are sopping.”

“ Take ’em off and carry them,” answered Rob flippantly. “ And you might carry the bundle for awhile, too, Mr. Jelly. You have n’t had a go at it yet, have you? ”

“ Hand it over,” said Jelly.

Presently they came to a little slope and at the bottom of that found a stone wall.

“ Now what? ” asked Evan.

“ Climb over it and keep going,” answered Malcolm doggedly. “ We ’ll have to get somewhere some time.”

“ So you say! Bet you we ’re walking in a circle.”

“ But think of the exercise we ’re getting, Evan,” said Rob. “ And look at the lovely

view! How beautiful are the distant hills in the sunset glow! ”

“ Don’t talk hills to me,” grunted Evan, “ or mountains either. I *would* like to see a sunset glow, though,” he added.

“ Hello, what ’s that? ” Rob stopped and peered into the fog ahead.

“ A rock, you idiot,” said Malcolm.

“ It is n’t; it ’s a cow! And there ’s another. We ’re probably away out West in the cattle country. I knew I ’d walked a long distance! ”

“ There are dozens of them,” said Jelly as they went on. “ If there are cows there must be a house somewhere around.”

“ We ’ll ask one of them,” said Rob. “ Good-afternoon, Mrs. Cow, will you kindly tell me where — ”

“ I don’t believe,” murmured Malcolm, “ that I ’d have much to say to that cow, Rob.” He pulled the other aside. “ She happens to be a bull.”

“ Gee, that’s so! And I don’t think he likes us. Let us alter our course and steer around him. Nice bull, nice bull! ”

They were in the middle of the herd now. The cows stopped nibbling at the grass and

viewed them with calm curiosity, some moving slowly away. The bull, however, which was a particularly large and active looking animal, displayed more interest. As they moved to the left he pawed the ground and then trotted ahead as though to intercept them.

“ I believe he ’s going to speak to us,” murmured Rob. “ Perhaps we ’d better go back.”

He was and he did. He stopped some twenty feet away, lowered his head and bellowed. Jelly gave a yell of dismay and took to his legs. The others didn’t waste time in vocal manifestations of alarm; they fled silently. As there had been no agreement as to direction they put out toward four different points of the compass. Just what it was about Jelly that attracted the bull is difficult to say; perhaps it was the bundle of tin plates and coffee-pot and things that rattled enticingly as he ran. At all events, it was on Jelly that the bull centered his attention and it was in his wake that he galloped. When the others paused for breath, through the silent mist came the rattle of tins and the thud of bovine hoofs. They listened in anxious suspense. Then, farther away, there was a terrorized shriek followed by an awesome bellow. Then silence, heavy and de-

pressing, broken a moment later by a great rattling of tinware. Then silence once more.

“Jelly!” cried Rob from one part of the field.

“Jelly!” called Malcolm from another. And,

“Jelly!” called Evan from another.

Faintly from a distance came an answering hail.

“Are you all right?” called Malcolm.

“Did he get you?” called Evan.

“Where are you?” shouted Rob.

“I’m up a tree,” was the answer, “and the blamed bull is waiting for me to come down!”

Three figures moved cautiously in the direction of the voice, calling softly to each other as they went.

“Come and drive him away!” appealed Jelly from the misty void. “I can’t hang on much longer!”

“We’re coming,” shouted Rob. “That you, Mal? Where’s Evan?”

“Here I am. What shall we do, fellows?”

“Blessed if I know,” answered Rob, pushing his cap away from his damp forehead and scowling. “We haven’t even a stick.”

“ Much good a stick would do,” said Malcolm. “ Come on, anyhow, and let ’s do something. Shout again, Jelly! ”

“ Over here, you — you fools! ” came Jelly’s voice from nearer at hand. “ He ’s trying to eat the coffee-pot! ”

“ Hope it chokes him,” muttered Rob as they hurried along.

“ There he is! ” whispered Evan, seizing Malcolm’s arm. But it was only a peaceable cow which trotted away at sight of them. Then, dimly in the fog ahead of them, they descried a small misshapen apple tree and a moving object beneath. They halted.

“ Is he still there, Jelly? ” asked Rob softly.

“ Of course he is! Can’t you see him? Are n’t you going to do anything? ”

“ Ye-es, certainly; only — what shall we do, Jelly? ”

“ Drive him away! ”

“ How? ”

“ Make a noise; scare him; do something; I can’t hold on here any longer, I tell you! I ’m slipping now! ”

“ Let ’s all yell together,” suggested Evan. “ Come on! ”

“ Wait! ” cried Malcolm. “ Let ’s run

toward him and yell like thunder. That ought to scare him."

They viewed each other doubtfully.

"Are n't you ever going to do anything?" wailed Jelly.

"Come on!" said Rob desperately.

They charged three abreast, yelling like Comanche Indians, charged blindly, heroically. For one instant the result trembled in the balance. Then the bull gave a short, terrified bellow and vanished into the mist. And at the same moment there was a thud and a crash and Jelly descended into a litter of tin plates and cups.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE FOG

“**A**RE you hurt?” asked Malcolm anxiously as he helped Jelly to his feet.

“I guess not,” was the aggrieved reply. “You fellows might have hurried a bit, though, it seems to me.” Jelly disencumbered one shoe of the coffee-pot and felt of himself gingerly. Around the foot of the gnarled apple-tree lay the contents of the bundle, trampled and battered. The piece of sacking decorated a lower branch like a flag of distress.

“You silly chump,” exclaimed Rob irritably, “what did you think we were going to do? Seize the bull by the horns and hold him while you came down and walked home? We don’t like bulls any better than you do.”

“Maybe we ’d better get out of here,” suggested Evan, casting nervous glances into the encircling fog. “He might come back to finish the job, you know.”

“ That ’s so. Maybe he ’s gone off to get his friends,” said Rob. “ Here, let ’s pick this stuff up. Did you throw the bundle at him, Jelly? ”

“ Throw it at him! There was n’t time to do any throwing,” answered Jelly crossly. “ He nearly got me. I dropped the things and made a flying leap at that branch. The next thing I knew he was digging his horns into the bundle. He got one horn through the sacking and could n’t get it off at first. And that made him mad. So he gave a bellow and tossed it into the tree and it just rained tin plates and frying-pans and forks and things for a minute. Then he danced around on them and butted the tree as though he was trying to jar me out. I ’ll bet you he ’s got an awful headache! I—I ’d like to shoot him! ”

“ I can’t find the string,” said Malcolm. “ We ’ll just have to hold the sack by the corners. Come on and let ’s get away from here.”

“ All right, but which way shall we go? ” asked Rob.

“ Oh, it does n’t matter; any old way. What ’s that? ”

It was the shriek of a distant locomotive. They turned toward the sound.

“ Well, that proves that the railroad is in that direction,” said Malcolm. “ Let ’s head that way.”

“ All right,” Rob answered, “ but that train may be at Engle or it may be ten miles north. Still, one way ’s as good as another. Come along. If we meet that bull, though, I tell you right now that I shall drop this tin shop and run like thunder! ”

They went on across the meadow through the fog which, instead of decreasing, seemed to thicken as evening drew near. They may have traversed a quarter of a mile of meadow or it may have been twice that distance, but at last a row of trees loomed out of the grayness ahead. The trees proved to be growing along a fence and on the other side of the fence was a country road. Rob seated himself on a rock and wiped his face with a damp handkerchief.

“ Well, here we are,” he said.

“ Where? ” scoffed Evan.

“ Why, on the road.”

“ What road? ”

“ Oh, don’t be so inquisitive. It ’s a road and that ’s enough. It must lead somewhere. I ’ll vow, though, that I never saw it before. Did you, Mal? ”

“ I think it ’s the Hillsgrove road,” answered Malcolm doubtfully. “ If it is we want to go to the right here. That ’ll take us to Riverport.”

“ And if it is n’t the Hillsgrove road,” asked Evan pessimistically, “ where will it take us to? ”

Malcolm could n’t answer that.

“ I don’t believe it ’s the Hillsgrove road at all,” said Jelly. “ I don’t remember any row of trees like this on it.”

“ I don’t seem to remember a row of trees like this on any road,” said Rob. “ But we might as well go one way as another, fellows. And perhaps we will meet someone. Gee, but I ’m getting hungry! ”

“ So am I,” muttered Evan dejectedly. “ I wonder if we ’ll get to school in time for supper.”

“ We won’t if we stay here,” said Jelly. “ I ’m going on.”

So they took the road and followed it as it curved through the darkening fog to the right. After awhile their ears were gladdened with the sound of a creaking wagon and a moment later it took shape before them. There was a dejected-looking horse and an equally dejected-

looking driver on the seat of an ancient farm wagon.

"Hello," greeted Rob. "Which way is Riverport School, sir?"

The man pulled his horse in and leisurely examined the boys before he answered.

"You belong there?" he asked in a suspicious way.

"Yes, but we've sort of lost our bearings in this fog."

The man chuckled.

"Well, you're coming away from it as fast as you can," he said. "Get ap."

"*What!*" they exclaimed in chorus. "Isn't this the Hillsgrove road?"

"No," replied the man over his shoulder as the horse broke into a slow jog, "it's the Lebanon Springs road, o' course. Guess you boys don't study geography much." And he chuckled some more.

"Well, what do you think of that?" marveled Malcolm.

"Say, can we have a ride?" called Rob.

"No, you can't; my horse is tired," was the ungracious response.

"How far is it to school?" shouted Malcolm.

“ ‘Bout two miles or two miles an’ a half, I guess.”

“ We’ll pay you for a lift,” Rob bawled after the vanishing driver. But there was no reply and the fog swallowed man and horse and vehicle.

“ Brute! ” muttered Evan.

“ Hope he breaks down,” said Jelly. “ Hope his horse has blind staggers. Hope — ”

“ That ’ll do, Jelly; you ’ve hoped enough. Hope for something worth while, like a trolley-car or an automobile or a flying-machine. Gee, fellows; two miles and a half he said! ” And Rob shook his head and looked dismally into the fog.

“ I ’d like to know how we ever got on the Lebanon Springs road,” pondered Malcolm as they began to retrace their steps.

“ I may be mistaken,” replied Rob, “ but I *think* we walked. Anyhow, my legs feel that way.”

“ I ’m glad you think it ’s such a good joke,” said Malcolm wearily. “ All I know is that when I get home, if I ever do, I ’m going to get straight into bed and go to sleep.”

“ Supper first, for me,” said Evan.

“ All I want is a drink,” wailed Jelly from

his accustomed position in the rear of the party. "The lake is n't very far over there. I've a good mind to look for it. I'm terribly thirsty."

"You'll stay right on the road," said Rob curtly. "I don't propose to spend the rest of the night hunting for you, Jelly. We'll be home in half an hour, likely, and you can drink all you want to."

"That does n't help now, though," grumbled Jelly.

A few minutes later the rural postman clattered up from behind in his buggy and passed them in the direction of Riverport, but not before Rob had hailed him and asked the distance to school.

"A little over a mile, I guess," was the reply.

That was encouraging and they pegged along. Then a dark object grew out of the mist ahead, and when they reached it they found that it was the dilapidated wagon and the dejected horse and the ill-natured farmer. He had broken a trace, and as they gathered around he looked up and scowled angrily.

"In trouble?" asked Rob sweetly.

"Can't you see I be?"

“ Well, I *am* sorry. We ’re all sorry, are n’t we, fellows? ”

“ Awfully! ”

“ Huh,” grunted the man.

“ Yes, because you were so kind and accommodating,” went on Rob genially. “ Your pressing invitation to ride with you quite won our hearts. Did it not, fellows? ”

“ It did — *not*,” said Malcolm.

“ You get out o’ here an’ let me be,” grunted the farmer.

“ Let you be what? ” asked Evan from a safe distance. Jelly sniggered and the farmer bent over his trace muttering savagely. The boys drew away to the side of the road, smiling broadly at each other.

“ What a beautiful horse,” remarked Jelly. “ I ’ll bet he ’s got a record.”

“ I ’ll bet they both have,” said Malcolm.

“ Look at his ears,” Evan directed.

“ Who ’s ears? ”

“ Why, the horse’s. Are they not eloquent? See how he carries one forward and the other back. He ’s listening for automobiles, I suppose. Don’t tell me that horse has n’t got sense.”

“ Sense! I should say he had sense!” said

Rob. "Why, that horse has the sense of the whole family!"

"Well, he's old enough to have sense," remarked Evan. "How old would you say, Malcolm?"

"Oh, I wouldn't call him exactly old. I don't suppose he's a day over fifty—or sixty!"

"That horse?" said Rob derisively. "Get out! Why, that horse is one of the ancient landmarks of the locality. He was captured wild on the slope of Graytop by the first settler."

"Was he hitched to that wagon when they caught him?" asked Malcolm.

"I believe so. Anyway, he wore the same harness."

"They don't make harness the way they used to," mourned Evan. "Look at that trace; why, that should have lasted years yet!"

"I know; it's a shame," said Malcolm. "That's a perfectly good harness. I saw one just like it once in a museum. Well, accidents will happen!"

Meanwhile the farmer, muttering crossly, had managed to mend the break with the aid of

his knife and a piece of stout cord. Now he climbed on to the seat again and picked up the reins.

“ You think you ’re smart, don’t you? ” he asked venomously.

“ Well,” answered Rob modestly, “ far be it from us to sound our own praises.”

“ You ’re a parcel of young fools, that ’s what you be! Get ap! ”

“ Whoa! ” shouted Jelly.

The horse preferred the second command to the first and remained motionless.

“ Get ap, I say! Get ap! ”

“ Whoa, Dobbin! ” was the chorus from the road. Dobbin started and stopped. Then the farmer found his whip in the bottom of the wagon and Dobbin decided to go.

“ If I was n’t in a hurry I ’d use this whip on you! ” shouted the farmer as the horse trotted away.

“ Look out! He ’s running away from you! ” bawled Malcolm. Driver and wagon disappeared and the boys took up their journey again, still laughing. The encounter had cheered them up wonderfully. Fifteen minutes later the gymnasium loomed through the fog at the left of the road and their troubles and

travels were over. As they cut across the slope toward Holden Malcolm said:

“ Give me the dishes and things, Rob, and I ’ll leave them at the kitchen.”

“ The di— ” Rob looked about in dismay. “ Has n’t anybody got them? ”

“ Have n’t *you* ? ” demanded Malcolm.

“ No. I thought — Oh, I remember now. I set them down when we climbed the fence back there. I guess they ’re there yet, Mal.”

“ Well, you ’re a wonder! Cook will give me the dickens.”

“ Oh, I ’ll pay for them. They were n’t much good, anyway, after the way Jelly dented them up.”

“ After *I* dented them up! ” exclaimed Jelly. “ I ’d like to know what I had to do with it. It was that silly bull! ”

“ Well, you gave them to him to play with, did n’t you? Now don’t try to evade responsibility, Jelly.”

“ Well, we ’ll never get any more,” said Malcolm. “ The next time we want to picnic — ”

“ The next time we want to picnic,” said Rob severely, “ I hope some one will clap us into an insane asylum. Don’t talk about picnics

to me, Mal, or I may do you mortal injury. I've had enough picnicking to last me fifty years!"

"So have I," grunted Jelly. "The next time you fellows ask me to go with you —"

"*The next time we ask you!*" cried Rob. But words failed him.

"I shall simply refuse," concluded Jelly as he limped away.

CHAPTER XIII

EVAN RETIRES

BY the end of the first week of the term Evan had settled down into his appointed groove and school routine was in full swing. At lessons Evan was neither a dullard nor a wonder; just an average student. He soon found that if he gave a fair amount of time to study he got on very well in class, and that if he did n't he met with trouble. Having a good fund of common sense he decided to keep out of trouble. At first it was n't easy to buckle down in the evenings to study, for Rob was a disturbing factor. Rob had a fashion of spending the study-hour in working on his marvelous inventions and then burning the "midnight juice," as he called the electric-light, until all hours. But after a while Evan got used to Rob's interruptions and accustomed to going asleep with the light shining in his face. Rob squirmed through recitations somehow, just how Evan could n't comprehend, and did n't let the

thought of impending examinations worry him. At present Rob was very busy with a combined comb and brush for the use of travelers, the comb working on a pivot at the end of the brush-handle and snapping back along the top of the brush when not in use. Rob was convinced that the invention was destined to great success and spent many hours of his time making drawings of it. He had discarded the foot-scraper, having discovered that the cost of manufacturing it would prohibit its use to all save millionaires.

Meanwhile the foot-ball situation remained practically unchanged. The team was still occupied with the rudiments, and day after day the candidates were falling on the ball, tackling, blocking, breaking through, passing, kicking and catching. Had there been any system apparent Evan and some of the other dissatisfied ones might have commended such a thorough schooling in preliminary work. But as it was the work was gone through with in a perfunctory way and no one seemed to understand the reason for anything. Hopkins took a hand now and then, but for the most part was content to superintend practice from the side-lines, leaving the brunt of the instruction to his three lieutenants, Carter and Ward and Connor. The

Second Team had organized and Gus Devens was captain, and Evan, after four homeless days, found himself playing substitute end on that team. It was a new position to him and truth compels me to state that so far he had n't covered himself with glory. It is possible that in the course of time, had he had any one to coach him, he might have developed into a good end. As it was, however, he had to teach himself by watching the other ends and reading what he could find regarding the duties of his position. The School Team's first game was only a week away, and while it was n't an important one Evan, for his part, could n't see that the team was any nearer being a team than it had been the first day of practice. He confided as much to Jelly one afternoon when they were changing their togs after practice. Jelly was strenuously trying for a guard position on the Second and was plumb full of enthusiasm.

"Why, they don't know a thing yet," he replied ecstatically, referring to the members of the First Team. "You wait until they get into a scrimmage with us. I'll bet we'll rip them all up the back the first try!"

"What sort of a team has Cardiff got?" asked Evan.

“ Oh, they don’t amount to anything. They don’t give us much more of a game than we ’d get in practice. They ’re a light lot; just easy pickings.”

“ Well, what is the first real hard game on the schedule? ”

“ Mountfort High,” answered Jelly promptly. “ Two weeks from Saturday. Last year the best we could do was to tie them; 10 to 10, it was; and it was a hard old game, too.”

“ Do you think our team ’s as good this year as it was last? ” Evan inquired. Jelly studied a moment.

“ I guess so,” he replied finally. “ But how can any one tell when they haven’t been in action yet? Why does n’t Hopkins get a move on and have a scrimmage? He ’s daffy this year about ‘ grounding the team in the rudiments of the game ’; I heard him spouting to Prentiss about it yesterday.”

“ It ’s a fine thing,” said Evan dryly, “ to know the rudiments, but it seems to me that a little squad work would n’t be a bad idea, to say nothing of getting the team together in a scrimmage once in a while.”

“ That ’s what I say,” replied Jelly impor-

tantly. "Gus is going to have us away ahead of the First if Hopkins does n't watch out."

Perhaps Jelly's prediction came to the captain's ear. At all events, the following afternoon the First, or School, team began signal practice, and two days later the first scrimmage of the year took place. Devens had done his work pretty well and the Second was successful in standing off the First during two ten-minute periods. Evan played at left end for a few minutes toward the finish of the last half and made rather a mess of it. He recognized the fact and wished that some one might tell him where his mistakes were. But there was no one to do it save Captain Devens, and Devens had too much on his hands already. The quota of candidates had swollen to over forty and just before the first contest, that with the Cardiff High School, Hopkins made his final cut, retaining seventeen candidates. Devens went over what was left and retained fifteen in all. The School Team, as it lined up against Cardiff on Wednesday afternoon, contained five of last years veterans, while the rest had played on the Second.

The game was not exciting, Cardiff proving to be weak in every department. On the other

hand, Riverport carried off few honors. Law's punting was good and Hopkins at left guard, and Reid at right tackle showed that they had not forgotten how to play. But the line, as a whole, was slow and listless, and against a faster team would have made a sorry showing. The backfield was rather a farce, if we except Joe Law at left. Miller, the quarter, was neither brilliant nor steady, and in the second half, in which Cardiff showed for a few minutes a flash of real form, Hopkins ran the team himself. In the last few minutes of play every substitute was used, and Grove, who replaced Miller, seemed to put some drive into the play. On the whole the game was featureless and rather valueless, since the opponents were not strong enough to show up Riverport's real weaknesses. However, nothing much is expected of the first contest, and Hopkins seemed well enough satisfied. At least, there was little criticism from him. Prentiss, who spent his time making memoranda on the side-line, had a good deal to say afterwards and was generous with stricture. But nobody paid much attention to Prentiss. He was n't popular and the players resented his meddling, since, as he did n't play the game himself, he was n't presumed to

know much about how it should or should n't be played.

On Thursday Evan was tried at end again on the Second. He did a trifle better, but Devens soon took him out in favor of Abbott and he spent the rest of the scrimmage sitting disgruntled on the side-line. Later, in the gymnasium, Devens came over to him.

"You don't seem to fit in at end, Kingsford," he began kindly enough. "You never played there much, eh?"

"Never until the other day," answered Evan soberly. "I told you when I started in that quarter or half was my line." Devens nodded.

"I remember, but we have pretty good halves and a good quarter. So I thought maybe I could make an end of you. What do you think? Want to try it some more?" Evan thought a minute. Then,

"I don't believe it's much use," he said frankly. "If there was some one to coach me a bit I think I could get the hang of it, but there is n't. I'd like to get a show at quarter, Devens; I think I could make good there."

"Well, we'll see. There's lots of time yet. You hang on, Kingsford."

So Evan "hung on," and, although the opportunity to prove himself at quarter-back did n't at once present itself, he gradually became a more useful member of the Second. He began to push Abbott and Robins, the first string ends, fairly hard, for he had speed, was certain on his feet and tackled hard and surely. But there are niceties connected with the position of end that Evan did n't know, and there was no one to tell him. Somerset High School was barely defeated 6 to 5. Riverport managed to score on a blocked kick and subsequently made the 5 a 6 by kicking a nice goal. Somerset made her score by hard work and only a narrow miss at goal saved her opponent from a tie game. In the last half Grove went in in place of Miller at quarter and, although not individually brilliant, ran the team in good shape and showed some generalship. It was difficult, though, to determine just what amount of credit was due to Grove and what amount to Hopkins, for the captain was always taking a hand in the running of the team.

The Somerset game was on Saturday and for the following week the team was put through hard practice in preparation for the Mountfort contest. On Tuesday Evan had his first chance

at quarter, Devens sending him in with the second squad for signal practice and later putting him into the scrimmage for some ten minutes. He did well enough considering that he had not played the position before for a year, and got speed out of the Second. But he was a little uncertain on signals and, with the Second on the First's twenty yard-line and the ball in their possession, made an error of judgment that lost them a possible score. The Second had been making its ten yards in three downs for some minutes through the right side of the opponent's line and there was apparently no reason to suppose that it could not continue to do so and cover that last twenty yards. But on the second down Evan called for a forward pass, got it off nicely and then saw Robins miss it on the five yard-line. If the play had worked Evan would have been commended for his daring. As it failed he got only criticism. Devens could find no fault, since he had not protested against the play, and I think that he would have given Evan other chances in the position had not Evan made that impossible for the time by falling on the steps of the gymnasium the next afternoon and turning his ankle. It was a bad twist, and for the next week he was out

of togs, limping around at first with bandages and later with a rubber anklet.

He gave up his last hope then and accepted the inevitable as cheerfully as he could. Devens was honestly sorry for him and told him so, but Evan noticed that he didn't say anything about staying in training and coming back to the team. So he nursed his injury and looked forward to the middle of October, when the dormitory teams would be formed to fight for the School Championship. Rob was sympathetic, and so was Malcolm, but they each treated the affair with a sort of I-told-you-so smugness that grated.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FOOTBALL MEETING

TWO evenings before the game with Mountfort High School a mass meeting was held in the assembly hall. Notices of the meeting had been posted for several days, but there was no wild excitement in evidence.

“ You ’re going over, are n’t you? ” asked Evan of Rob after supper was over that evening and the boys had returned to their room.

“ Oh, yes, I shall go over and see the fun,” replied Rob. “ You had better come along. And we ’ll get Mal.”

“ What ’s it all about? ” Evan inquired. “ What do they do? ”

“ Oh, it ’s supposed to be a sort of enthusiastic gathering to show the team that the School loves them; also to contribute little sums of money into the coffer.”

“ Oh,” said Evan. “ How much should I give? ”

Rob shrugged his shoulders and ran his fingers through his long hair.

“That’s up to you, Evan,” he answered. “I’d suggest, however, that you donate about the same amount as I shall.”

“And how much shall you give?”

“Not a red cent,” said Rob curtly.

“Oh, but that hardly seems fair, does it?” Evan asked doubtfully. “I think I’d rather contribute something, Rob.”

“All right; then give ’em a dollar. You’re just throwing your dollar away, though.”

“What do most of the fellows give?”

“You’re supposed to give what you can afford — or what you want to give. I used to give ’em two, but what’s the use? Let’s find Mal and go on over.”

The hall was rather sparsely inhabited when Prentiss arose to address the meeting. Rob and Evan and Malcolm sat together on a front bench, and there were about seventy other chaps in attendance. Prentiss explained that the meeting had been called in pursuance of a school custom to acquaint the supporters of the football team with the plans for the season and to secure from them funds with which to carry out those plans. He informed the audi-

ence that the football treasury had held the sum of twelve dollars and eighty cents at the beginning of the year, that amount having been left over from the previous season.

“Of course,” he went on, “that did n’t last very long. We have had to purchase several balls, buy lime for the purpose of marking out the field and get quite a few little things to begin work with. We are now without funds and it is necessary that your response to-night should be generous. We shall need fully a hundred and fifty dollars to carry us through the season. There will be new sweaters to purchase for the entire team and one or two pairs of trousers. Of recent years it has been the custom for players to supply their own shoes, but I think that is a mistake. Lots of fellows can’t afford to pay what they ought to to get a good shoe and the result is that they buy cheap things that don’t give good service. And that naturally affects their playing. I think the Football Association should buy shoes as well as clothing for the players, and I ’m sure you will agree with me. Our schedule this season includes games with several teams that require us to travel away from home, and the item of railroad fares will be considerable. So I hope you

fellows will respond heartily to our appeal, remembering that you are giving to the School and aiding it in its struggle for football pre-eminence. You all want to witness a victory over Adams, and the first step toward the — the realization of that desire is to put the Team on its feet financially. Captain Hopkins has a few words to say before we proceed to business.”

There was a smatter of applause as the manager took his seat and Frank Hopkins arose. Hopkins could talk very well when he was in the mood, and he realized that to-night was a time when eloquence was needed. The slim attendance was not encouraging, and the spirit of the meeting evidently left much to be desired in the way of warmth and enthusiasm. Hopkins thrust his hands into his coat pockets and viewed the audience with a genial smile.

“ Well,” he began, “ what I have to say is n’t of great consequence, fellows. You all know why you’re here. We need money for the Team. We can’t run a football team without money. Fellows have to be clothed and shod and we have to have balls and head-gears and nose-protectors and other things too numerous to mention. They all cost money. And, as the

manager has just told you, we 're stoney-broke at this moment. We could n't scrape up ten cents if we tried. In fact, both Prentiss and I have had to advance small sums of money to keep things going this far. But we 're going to have a good team this year, one that you 'll all be proud of."

" Yes, indeed," called a sarcastic voice from the audience, and a ripple of titters arose. Hopkins frowned momentarily, but quickly remembered his role of geniality and went on :

" We 've got enough fellows from last year's team to form an excellent basis to build upon. And the new material in sight is unusually good. In short, the outlook is distinctly encouraging, and I, for one, am quite optimistic regarding the work ahead. Adams has triumphed too long — "

Applause, and a shrill " That 's no joke! " from somewhere at the back of the room.

" She has triumphed too long and it is time that we show her that Riverport is still to be reckoned with. And this fall, fellows, you 'll see a turning of the tables. We 're going to give old Adams a drubbing that will make up, more than make up for past defeats! "

“ So *you* say ! ” somebody remarked after the applause had died down. Hopkins turned in the direction of the voice.

“ I see,” he said, “ that we have one or two ‘ knockers ’ with us. That ’s to be expected, however. There are always a few fellows sufficiently lacking in patriotism and school spirit to think it smart to jeer. Well, I guess that ’s all I ’ve got to say this evening. Except that I hope you will help us all you can. If every one of you will give what he is able to we, on our part, will fulfill our share of the contract. And I ’ll tell you right now, fellows, that when the season is done you ’ll have no cause to regret your generosity.”

Hopkins had made a good speech and even Rob was forced to clap a little as the captain took his seat again. Joe Law arose and demanded “ a cheer for Captain Hopkins ” and the audience responded fairly well.

“ Now,” announced Prentiss, taking the platform again, “ some of the fellows will pass through the hall and receive your contributions. When it is possible, please give cash. If you have n’t the cash, then write your pledges on the slips of paper.”

Law and three other football men arose and

started on the rounds. A buzz of conversation dispelled the quiet of the hall.

“ Guess I ought to give a couple of dollars,” whispered Evan to Rob. Rob frowned.

“ If you do, you ’re an idiot,” he growled. “ What are you going to give, Mal? ”

“ Oh, a dollar, I reckon. I ’d rather not give them anything, but it seems rather small not to.”

“ Then I ’ll give a dollar, too,” said Evan as he found his pocket-book. “ If they got that much from every fellow — ”

“ They won’t, though,” said Rob. “ A lot of them won’t give a cent. And some think a half ’s enough. If they get a hundred this year they ’ll be doing mighty well. The fellows are getting tired of paying for a football team that never delivers the goods.”

Law passed the cap along the row and Evan and Malcolm deposited their contributions. Law stared at Rob.

“ Come on, now, Rob,” he said, “ shell out.”

“ Not me,” answered Rob with a smile. “ I have better use for my money, Joe. Go on with your old hat.”

“ My, but you ’re a tight-wad,” said Joe, with a shrug of his big shoulders.

Presently the collectors handed their harvest to Prentiss. The audience waited to hear the result announced. Prentiss and Hopkins counted and figured and at last the former came to the front of the platform with a slip in his hand.

“Does n’t look happy, does he?” chuckled Rob.

“The amount contributed,” announced Prentiss with thinly veiled sarcasm, “is eighty dollars and sixty cents. I want to thank the generous donor of that ten cent piece if he will stand up where I can see him.”

The audience laughed, but no one arose.

“Of course,” continued Prentiss, “there ’s no necessity for me to tell you that you have n’t subscribed much more than half enough money. But that ’s your look-out, I guess. If you don’t want a decent team, why, you ’re going the right way to get what you do want. To those that have contributed generously — and a few have — I offer thanks. The meeting is over.”

“It ’s better than I thought it would be,” chuckled Rob as they pushed their way through the throng at the door. “A long ways eighty dollars will take them!”

“What do you suppose they ’ll do?” asked Evan.

“I guess they ’ll go broke. Probably make their last year’s uniforms do instead of getting new ones. It’s all nonsense, anyway, for Prentiss to say that they have to have a hundred and fifty dollars. A good manager could get along with not much more than half of that. I guess they ’ll have to this year.”

“Oh, they ’ll probably call another meeting,” said Malcolm, “or send around canvassers to get after the fellows who have n’t contributed.”

“They don’t know who have contributed and who have n’t,” said Rob, “aside from those who signed their names to pledges. All a fellow would have to do when a canvasser tackled him would be to say that he gave cash at the meeting to-night.”

“That ’s so,” Malcolm agreed.

“I sort of wish I ’d given another dollar,” mused Evan. “I ’d like to see the team wallop Adams, and if they need money to be able to do that it seems as though they ought to have it.”

“It is n’t money they need,” said Rob, “but some good players, a decent captain and manager and somebody to show them football. If

Hop would engage a coach he could get all the money he needed, and more too. The trouble with those two chaps is that they 've got it into their heads that *they* are the Riverport Football Team. They want to do it all themselves. Even if Hop got a coach he 'd be always interfering and I guess Mr. Coach would stay about one week. Then he 'd kick Hop and get out."

"This is Hopkins' last year, is n't it?" Evan asked.

"Yes, praises be! And Prentiss's, too."

"Who will be captain next year, then?"

"I don't know. Hop and Prentiss will arrange that between them. I think, though, that Joe Law is getting into line for the honor. Or maybe the mantle will descend upon Miller."

"But don't they hold an election?"

"Sort of a one. It's all fixed beforehand, though. Hop will tell the fellows whom he wants elected and they 'll vote as he tells them to. It's rather a farce. The whole thing's a farce. But we're going to change it, fellows."

"Are we?" laughed Malcolm. "And how are we going to do it?"

Rob shook his head mysteriously.

“ You wait and see,” he answered.

It was still early when they reached the dormitory and they went into Malcolm’s room and made themselves comfortable and continued their discussion of the football situation. Rob was extremely eloquent this evening and derived a lot of pleasure in hauling Hopkins and Prentiss over the coals.

“ I don’t see,” he said finally to Evan, “ why you want to give those chaps money for their old team after the way they treated you.”

“ Well, I dare say I did n’t do very well,” Evan replied. “ In fact, I ’m sure I did n’t. I can’t play end and I told Devens so when I started. And he did n’t need a quarter or a half — ”

“ The dickens he did n’t! Call that chap Hinckley a half-back, do you? Well, I don’t. And they need a good quarter on the First Team, too. Miller ’s a frost. How ’s the ankle getting on? ”

“ Oh, it ’s all right now,” Evan replied.

“ That ’s good. You may need the use of it before long.”

“ Why? ”

“ Oh, you ’ll see.”

“ Say, Rob, you ’re beastly mysterious to-night,” complained Malcolm. “ What have you got up your sleeve? ”

“ Only my arm,” answered Rob. “ I ’ll tell you all about it, Mal, as soon as — as my plans are perfected.”

“ You and your plans!” grunted Malcolm derisively.

When Rob and Evan said good-night and returned to their own room Evan got ready for bed, but Rob, after partially undressing, went to the lower drawer of his bureau and began hauling things over. That lower drawer was Rob’s workshop. There were all sorts of tools there and spools of wire and pieces of metal and odds and ends of all kinds. Evan called it the junk-shop. When working on one of his numerous inventions Rob produced a board about three feet long and eighteen inches wide from the closet and set it on his bed. Then he drew his chair up to it and filed or hammered or whittled to his heart’s content. There was usually a litter of shavings or metal filings — sometimes both — on bed and floor, and Evan had long ago learned to avoid that part of the room unless his feet were protected with slippers. It is n’t pleasant to step on nails or

screws or ends of wire, as Evan was continually doing at first. To-night Rob emptied a cigar-box of its contents, fixed his improvised bench in place and set to work with knife and paste-pot.

“What are you up to?” inquired Evan.

“You wait and see,” was the pre-occupied answer. Evan laid hold of a book and threatened Rob’s head with it.

“If you say that to me again to-night, Rob, I’ll brain you!” he declared. Rob looked up, laughed and went on with his work.

“All right, chum, I’ll tell you, then. It’s this way. Your eloquence in behalf of the football team this evening has touched my caloused heart, Evan. Something ought to be done to secure the money they need, and I’m doing it.”

“Well, what’s the cigar-box for?”

“It is no longer a cigar-box; that is, it will be no longer a cigar-box when I get through with it; it will be a contribution-box. I am making a slot here in the lid, you see. Then I shall tack the lid down, cover the whole with nice pink paper and adorn it with a suitable inscription, an inscription that will wring the pennies from the penniless.”

“ Rob, you ’re an awful idiot,” laughed Evan as he slipped into bed. “ Finish it in the morning and let ’s get to sleep.”

“ Never put off until to-morrow what can be done to-night,” replied Rob virtuously. “ You just turn your little face away from the light and compose yourself for slumber, Evan.”

“ Oh, thunder, I can’t go to sleep with that light shining! ”

“ Bet you you ’ll be snoring inside of ten minutes.”

“ Bet you I won’t. Besides, I don’t snore. You do the snoring for this establishment, you human calliope.”

“ No one ever called me that before,” said Rob sadly. “ Really, Evan, I don’t believe that I snore. I think you dream it.”

“ Oh, you do, eh? ” muttered Evan as he turned over. “ I just wish you had to listen to yourself sometimes! ”

Rob won his wager, for Evan, if he did n’t actually snore, at least proved conclusively within the designated time that he was sound asleep. Half an hour later he opened his eyes during a wakeful moment and saw Rob still at work on the cigar-box. How late he labored with it Evan never knew, but in the morning

it was finished. Evan saw it the first thing after getting up, read the inscription and howled loudly and gleefully, but not loud enough to awake Rob who was still sleeping the sleep of one who has kept late hours.

CHAPTER XV

THE CONTRIBUTION - BOX

WHEN the fellows came out from chapel the contribution-box adorned the top of the radiator under the notice board in the corridor of Academy Hall. It was neatly covered with pink paper, there was a slot in the cover and these words in large black letters explained its purpose:

AID FOR THE HELPLESS!
DROP YOUR PENNIES HERE FOR THE
FOOTBALL TEAM!

The joke won instant approval and penny after penny went through the slot. The School was vastly amused and the contribution-box remained on the radiator until the middle of the forenoon, at which time Edgar Prentiss, having heard of it, descended upon it in wrath and kicked it across the corridor, wrecking it

completely and strewing the floor with coppers which were ultimately recovered by some of the younger boys, for whom they undoubtedly did as much good as they would have done the football team. Rob never acknowledged himself to have been the perpetrator of the joke, and Evan never told, but for some reason suspicion attached itself to him, and Hopkins and Prentiss, neither of whom had loved him very well before, found new grounds for dislike. Prentiss even made public display of his resentment.

Rob was standing on the steps of Academy after dinner with Malcolm and Wright when Prentiss came along. They all nodded to him and Prentiss responded, but as he reached the door he turned back and addressed Rob.

“ Say, Langton, you think you ’re smart, don’t you? ” he sneered.

Rob looked at once surprised and pained.

“ I do? Why do you say thus? ”

“ Putting that fool box in there. If you don’t want the school to have a foot-ball team that ’s your affair, I suppose. But you might act like a gentleman and not try to ridicule the team.”

“ Do you suspect me of that? ” asked Rob sorrowfully.

“ I don’t suspect; I know,” responded Prentiss warmly. “ Any one would think you were a prep, doing such fool stunts as that! ”

“ I don’t see what you ’re mad about, though,” said Rob innocently. “ I ’ll bet there was as much as sixty cents in that box.”

“ I ’ll bet you did n’t give any of it, then! ” Prentiss sneered.

“ You wrong me. I gave a whole bright, new penny.”

“ That ’s more than you gave at the meeting last night.”

“ I did n’t have a penny with me then,” answered Rob sweetly. “ If I had I ’d have given it, really and truly. I don’t see how you can expect fellows to give money if you scatter it around the floor the way you did this morning. Why, there was enough in that contribution-box to buy half a dozen ice-cream sodas for the captain and manager! ”

“ Look here,” demanded Prentiss angrily, “ do you mean to insinuate that I spend the football funds on soda water? ”

“ Of course not. How could you when you keep a nice itemized account of all expenditures? Let me see, you did n’t read the accounts last night, did you? ”

“ I ’m not required to ; but if you mean to accuse me of stealing the football money, Langton, you ’d better come right out and say so.”

“ He does n’t,” interposed Wright soothingly. “ He ’s just talking, are n’t you, Rob? ”

“ Am I? Just as you say. All right, then, Prentiss, I ’m just talking. It ’s a habit I have.”

“ You talk too much,” growled Prentiss wrathfully. “ You ’re a sore-head, that ’s what you are. You ’re always trying to make trouble for Hop and me. Just because you tried for the team last year and did n’t make it you do nothing but knock. You make me tired.”

“ That ’s all right. You ’re not the only one that ’s tired. You ’ll find that there are a whole lot of others who are tired, too. Tired of giving their money to a football team that never makes good from one year to the next, tired of having you and Hopkins run the whole thing yourselves. Oh, you ’re not the only tired one, Prentiss! ”

“ I suppose you think you ought to manage it? ”

“ Well, I ’m naturally modest,” drawled Rob, “ but I have had suspicions that way.” Prentiss laughed derisively.

“ You ’d make a dandy manager, you would. Maybe you ’d like to be captain, too? ”

“ Not of that team, thanks.”

“ Is that so? Why, you don’t know the first thing about football, Lanky; you ’re a joke! ” And Prentiss disappeared laughing hugely.

Rob smiled as he looked after him.

“ What did you mean by that ice-cream soda remark? ” asked Malcolm.

“ Nothing much. Only last fall I was in Webster’s buying some fountain-pen ink when Hop and Prentiss came in. They did n’t see me, because I was at the back of the store and there was a wire rack filled with sponges in front of me. ‘ What will you have? ’ asked Hopkins. ‘ Oh, ice-cream soda, I guess,’ Prentiss answered. ‘ Might as well take the best. It does n’t come out of our pocket, Hop.’ And Hop laughed and said he guessed that was about right; ‘ Incidentals, eh, Ed? ’ he asked. Oh, of course, I don’t *know* anything,” ended Rob dryly, “ but I sort of suspect! ”

“ Well, you made Prentiss mad, all right,” chuckled Mal.

“ I thought he was going to light into you,” said Wright.

“ Did you? I did n’t. I know him. He

would n't light into a flea! " Rob smiled. " Say, why do you suppose he thinks I put that old box in there? "

" Well, did n't you? " asked Wright. " Every one says you did. "

" How extremely absurd, " murmured Rob. " It was a cigar-box, and every one knows I don't smoke cigars. Let 's go in and take a fall out of English. Mal, have you any idea what the lesson 's about? I quite forgot to look at it last night. I — er — I was busy. "

There was much speculation as to what steps Hopkins and Prentiss would take to secure the balance of the money needed for the team. Perhaps I should say wanted instead of needed, for the concensus of opinion was to the effect that eighty-odd dollars was quite as much as past performances warranted. But curiosity was soon satisfied, for the next morning, Saturday, the following notice appeared in Academy Hall:

" Contributions for Foot-Ball Team

" The Football Meeting held Thursday evening was poorly attended and the amount of money contributed toward the expenses of the

Team is quite inadequate. The Management desires to announce to the School that unless more funds are placed at its disposal the Team will be severely handicapped at the outset of what promises to be a most successful season. Those who have not contributed are earnestly requested to do so at once to Edgar Prentiss, Manager. Below is a list of students' names arranged alphabetically by Classes, the names of those who have already contributed being crossed off with red ink. If the Management has failed to give credit in any case the omission will be rectified if brought to its attention. The names of future contributors will be scored off on the list.

“ FRANK HOPKINS, *Captain*.

“ EDGAR PRENTISS, *Manager*.”

Then followed the list of names, and that list caused not a little commotion all day, for there were numerous cases where fellows had given cash at the meeting and had not been credited, since Hopkins and Prentiss, aided by the four fellows who had passed the hats, had been forced to substitute knowledge with surmise pretty frequently. That notice witnessed many scenes of indignation.

“ Well, what do you think of that? ” some youth would ejaculate after finding his name. “ I gave two dollars to their punk old football team and now they say I didn’t give a red! Where’s that chap Prentiss? I’ll tell him what I think of him, you bet! ”

And the indignant one would hurry away in search of the manager and vindication.

The appeal landed a few more contributions, but was, on the whole, a failure. Rob inveighed eloquently against it at the dinner-table that noon.

“ It’s a bare-faced attempt at intimidation and extortion,” he declared.

“ Those are dandy words, Rob,” said Pierce.

“ It’s — it’s blackmail, that’s what it is! If you don’t give money you are publicly posted as mean-spirited and miserly and unpatriotic. No one is bound to contribute to athletics of any sort, and that’s understood. Lots of fellows can’t give money to the football team and that list over there in Academy will show that they haven’t given and they’ll either be shamed into doing what they can’t afford to or will know that other chaps are despising them for being mean.”

“ Oh, nonsense, Rob,” Wright protested,

“ it is n’t as bad as that. I ’ll acknowledge that they have n’t any business doing a stunt of that sort, but every fellow takes it as a sort of joke ; just as they ’re beginning to take Hop and Prentiss and the team, too. I would n’t care a rap whether my name had a red line through it or not.”

“ Maybe you would n’t, but there are plenty who would ; young fellows in the prep class, for instance. Lots of them don’t have more than a quarter of a dollar a week for pocket-money and to ask them to contribute to the football team is rank foolishness. There ’s one name on that list that has n’t got a red line through it, though, and it won’t have ; and that ’s the name of Robert Langton, Esquire.”

“ Langton, you ’re a dandy hater, are n’t you ? ” said Peterson with a laugh.

“ I was n’t going to give anything,” said Jelly, “ but every one was looking, and so — ”

“ You conceited little fat rascal ! ” exclaimed Wright. “ Why, I don’t suppose any one knew you were in the hall ! ”

“ That ’s all right,” answered Jelly imperturbably. “ Anyway, I gave them a dollar and I wish I had n’t.”

“ Is n’t it worth that to keep your place on

the Second?" asked Rob. "You know very well, Jelly, you'd get fired if you didn't pay up. I'm not sure that, as a member of the Second Team, you should n't have given a good deal more than a dollar."

"I'll give them another dollar when Gus Devens puts me in the first line-up," said Jelly shrewdly. "One's enough for a substitute, though." The others laughed.

"For my part," said Wright, "I feel rather sorry for Hop. He really wants to win this year and I dare say he's doing the best he knows how, although it may not be a very good best. Seems to me we ought to give him enough money to go ahead with."

"Rot! They've got enough now!" Rob helped himself to another potato. "It doesn't need new jerseys and sweaters to win from Adams; it needs football sense. And that's something neither Hop nor Prentiss has got. Why, I'd be willing to wager anything I've got that Mountfort will make our team look like a set of cripples this afternoon."

"Mountfort? Nonsense!" jeered Peterson. "Why, Mountfort's only a high school!"

"All right; you wait and see. As you say, Mountfort's only a high school and conse-

quently we ought to beat her by two or three scores; is n't that so? "

" Well, two scores, maybe," hedged Peterson. " After all, Langton, it 's pretty early yet and we have n't got under way."

" It 's early for Mountfort, too, is n't it? But we 'll say two scores, then, Peterson. Now I 'll tell you what I 'll do. If Riverport wins from Mountfort this afternoon by a margin of two scores — no, by Jove, by *one* score! — neither Jelly nor I will eat any supper to-night! "

" *What!* " shrieked Jelly in alarm. " You speak for yourself, Rob. I 'm not coming in on any silly arrangement like that. I need my supper."

" Oh, be a sport, Jelly," Evan laughed. " What do you care about supper if we win? "

" We won't win," answered Jelly. " Pass the gravy, please."

" Then you 're safe, are n't you? I mean your supper 's safe."

" I don't believe in taking risks," replied Jelly with a wise shake of his head.

" Well, if Jelly throws me down," said Rob smilingly, " I 'll go it alone."

" Never be it said that I deserted you in your

hour of need, Rob," Evan declared. "I will starve with you."

"Look here, though, you two," said Pierce. "No crackers and jam and stuff in your room afterwards."

"We have n't any," laughed Evan. "The only thing we might eat is some of Rob's nails and screws and such. No, this is straight, is n't it, Rob?"

"Absolutely! If Hop's team wins from Mountfort this afternoon Evan and I go supperless."

"Well, I call that a sporting proposition," said Peterson admiringly. "Much as I'd hate to have you go without supper, Rob, I must say I'd like our team to win."

"It has n't a show to win," said Rob confidently. "Why, my dear, misguided friend, our team has n't shown a single flash of football yet."

"Well, we'll see later," responded Peterson, pushing back his chair. "That's right, Jelly, eat all you can now, for you're not likely to get anything more to-day."

"Me?" sputtered Jelly. "I tell you I'm not in that bargain! I refuse to have anything to do with it! I don't have to, do I, Rob?"

“ No, you may eat as much as usual, Jelly, no matter what may be the fortunes of war. And just think, Jelly! If Evan and I do lose you ’ll have two other suppers to eat! ”

“ Say, may I have your preserves, Rob? ” asked Jelly eagerly. “ May I have yours, Evan? ”

“ Yes,” Rob replied laughingly, “ but I wouldn’t count on it, Jelly. I rather fancy we ’ll need our suppers ourselves.”

Faculty agreed with Rob in his judgment of the foot-ball notice and it disappeared that afternoon. Mr. Holt, the school secretary, stopped and read it on his way through the corridor to dinner and later brought it to the attention of Doctor Farren.

“ That,” said the Doctor, “ scarcely agrees with the principles of the school, Holt. It savors too much of compulsion. Kindly remove it and return it to Prentiss with an explanation. It seems to me,” he added musingly, “ that athletics are growing more expensive every year. I don’t recall that in my day we required any such sums to run our teams. And, as I recollect, Holt, we won just about as often as we do now.”

“ Quite possible,” answered the secretary cynically.

CHAPTER XVI

ROB PLAYS A TRUMP

MOUNTFORT came along that afternoon with a big, well-drilled confident team. Hopkins put his best line-up against it. But his best was n't nearly good enough. That fact was evident almost from the kick-off, when Riverport, having won the toss, chose its goal and gave the ball to Mountfort.

There was a long high punt and Mountfort came charging down under it so swiftly and earnestly that Miller, who had caught the ball on his twelve yards, was downed almost before he could take a step. Miller tried the center of the Mountfort line and made little impression. A split play, with the ball going through left tackle, netted four yards. Then Law dropped back for a kick. The defence crumpled like paper and the best he could do was to fall on the ball for a safety, scoring 2 for Mountfort. After that it was nip and tuck for a while, with

the play ranging inside the thirty-five yard-lines and neither side getting near enough to make a score look imminent.

Each team was weaker on defence than on offence, but Mountfort had the better of her adversary here as in all other departments of the game. Toward the end of the first half Miller tried an open game and got off one forward pass that netted twenty yards and an on-side kick that was recovered on the latter's fifteen yard-line. The audience, comprised almost entirely of Riverport sympathizers, demanded a touchdown and the team tried its best to oblige. But two downs only brought eight yards and the third lost the ball, Mountfort solving the play — a straight plunge at center, before it was well under way.

Mountfort punted to the center of the field and her fast ends brought down their man without trouble. A minute later time was called and the first half ended with Mountfort in the lead, 2 points to 0. Riverport, however, was not dismayed. She meant to go in in the last period and win the game. And every one in the local camp expected her to. Mountfort had n't showed anything but the straightest kind of straight football and if Riverport could hold

her as she had done in the first half — barring the moment when that kick had been spoiled — there was no good reason, or so it seemed, why Riverport should not at least score something better than a miserable 2. But you never can tell what will happen in a second half.

It was Riverport's kick-off and Law sent a beauty down the field. A Mountfort back took it and started across toward the side-line. Riverport swung toward him. The back passed to another back and the latter streaked up the opposite side of the field with the ball cosily snuggled under his arm. It was an old trick, but it caught Riverport napping. The runner had almost a clear field before the ruse was discovered. Reid, right tackle, made a dive for him and missed, and only Miller stood between him and a touchdown. Behind him raced friend and foe alike, but he had little to fear from the rear. Miller made a desperate effort to edge him toward the side-line, failed and made a leap at him. The runner dodged, whirled, shook off Miller's grasp and romped between the up-rights for a touch-down. The Mountfort captain kicked an easy goal and the score stood 8 to 0.

After that Mountfort took chances and

opened up a bag of tricks that utterly confused and overwhelmed her adversary. There were forward passes galore; short ones, long ones, expected ones, unexpected ones; forward passes from close formation, forward passes from kick formation; forward passes at the most unlikely times. And they worked time and again, worked because Riverport had not been taught a proper defence against them, because she was bewildered and confused and because, saddest thing of all, she was tired and played out almost to a man. Hopkins replaced man after man, and Grove took Miller's place and tried heroically to bring order out of chaos. But the Mountfort quarter gave Riverport no time to recover herself. He worked his team faster and faster until in the last five minutes of play such speed had never been seen in the second half of a contest on Riverport Field. And Riverport, out-played and out-generalled, weary, sore and dazed, went down in defeat to the final overwhelming score of 25 to 0!

It was a silent and very disgusted throng of spectators that straggled back up the slope to the school. They were much too surprised as yet to talk. The talk came later, in dining-hall at supper-time, in the rooms afterwards. The



“ IT WAS A SILENT AND VERY DISGUSTED THRONG OF SPECTATORS.”

consensus of opinion was that the Riverport School Football Team was "pretty punk." Not a lovely phrase that, but it was very generally used and seemed to satisfy the requirements of the occasion. Of course there were all sorts of theories advanced to account for the day's Waterloo, and fellows who didn't know a touch-back from a nose-guard explained the whole trouble beautifully. In 32 Holden there was little discussion for the reason that Rob wouldn't discuss, while Malcolm, as he had never played football, modestly refrained from offering opinions. All Rob would say, and he said it in an exasperatingly mysterious manner, was:

"Wait! The hour is at hand!"

With Malcolm's assistance, Evan got Rob down on his bed and buried him under pillows — and then sat on the pillows. But all his reward was a stifled: "Wait! The hour is at hand!"

The school was pretty well disgusted with the football situation, and the disgust increased when on the following Monday the Second Team tore up the First and scored a touch-down and a field-goal. Certainly the fact that the First's line-up contained five substitutes had something

to do with the Second's easy conquest, but didn't account for it entirely. The fact is that the First Team was suffering from something very much like nervous prostration. On Tuesday the feeling against the team was manifested on the field. Some forty boys marched down in procession and shouted derisive, unkind remarks during practice. Hopkins came in for more attention than he relished, while Prentiss lost his temper on several occasions. The Second held the First to a no-score tie throughout the two periods of scrimmaging, in spite of the fact that the First had all its best players back. Whenever the Second gained a yard the audience cheered wildly; when the First gained it was accorded hoots of derision. Nothing of the sort had ever happened before at Riverport and the school that evening was in a state of unwonted excitement. There was talk of a mass-meeting to protest against the present conduct of football affairs, but the project fell through because none of the upper class fellows would consent to issue the call. They took the stand that while the situation was pretty discouraging it was the school's duty to stand by the team, that only harm could result from embarrassing the management. So

the mass-meeting degenerated into a procession which marched through the yard at nine o'clock carrying placards and hooting derisively. One of the placards read: " We Want a Football Team "; another, " Riverport 0, Mountfort, 25 "; another, " Try Jamaica Ginger "; another, " Wanted, A Nurse. Apply to Manager R. S. F. A. " After circling the yard the procession marched around to the rear of Holden and serenaded Hopkins and Prentiss. I use the word serenaded for want of a better; music is music even if it contains discords. Then there were " three long groans for the eleven! " given with a will, and demands for a speech by Prentiss. The latter made the mistake of losing his temper and emptied a pitcher of water from the window. As the serenaders were momentarily expecting some such delicate attention no one was dampened. Neither was their ardor. The concert, which had been on the point of ending, took a new lease of life and continued until faculty took a hand and threatened trouble for the disturbers.

Neither Evan nor Rob took part in the demonstration, while as for Malcolm he studied calmly through it all. Rob had been hand and glove with the ring-leaders earlier in the eve-

ning and had himself decorated the placards carried in the procession, but for some reason known only to himself he had refrained from joining the parade. When Evan dropped off to sleep that night Rob was writing busily at the table, and although Evan did n't know what he was up to he was fairly certain from the concentration displayed that it had nothing to do with studies. And Evan was right. The result of Rob's labor appeared on the notice board in Academy Hall the next morning.

" A Meeting will be held this evening at 7:15 in 8 First House to consider the formation of an Independent Foot-ball Eleven. All are asked to attend, whether players or not.

" HOWARD WELLINGTON.

" ROBERT LANGTON."

CHAPTER XVII

THE INDEPENDENTS ORGANIZE

HOWARD WELLINGTON was a senior, a quiet fellow, much respected by the rest of the school, with a positive passion for reforming things. Rob was well aware of this passion and had counted on it to secure Wellington's coöperation in his plan. And Wellington had not failed him. Rob had a persuasive tongue and it had n't been difficult for him to convince Wellington that if anything ever needed reformation it was the foot-ball situation at Riverport School. Wellington had held off at first, viewing Rob's scheme as merely a revolt on the part of disappointed foot-ball candidates, but Rob had soon persuaded him that the movement was purely patriotic and Wellington had enthusiastically pledged himself to the cause.

The announcement on the notice-board created a deal of excitement and discussion and

both Wellington and Rob were kept busy parrying questions. All either would say was: "Come to the meeting and find out." So they came to the meeting. The rooms in First House are fairly good-sized, but none of them will hold a hundred-odd boys, and so by a quarter past seven the audience was overflowing through the door into the corridor. Neither Hopkins nor Prentiss was there, but they were represented by two of their ablest lieutenants, Carter and Law. Besides these there were at least a half-dozen of the First Team present, probably out of mere curiosity. The Second Team was much better represented. In fact, Riverport School, with the exceptions already indicated and save for the absence of a handful of older fellows who looked on the thing as utter nonsense, was on hand when Wellington, jammed tightly against the window-ledge, called the meeting to order.

"Fellows," he announced, "for some time, in fact for something over a year, there has been a general feeling of dissatisfaction over the condition of athletics here at Riverport." (Loud applause greeted this.) "I'm not prepared to say where the trouble lies, but there is trouble." ("There's going to be more!")

cried an irrepressible prep.) “ We have not won, either in base-ball, rowing, hockey or football, a fair proportion of our contests. Just at present football is the — er — dominant issue, and we will confine our attention to that. Last year out of nine games played we won — ” he referred to a paper here — “ we won five. The five, however, were all early games with weaker teams. Of the remaining games we tied one and lost three, among them that with our chief rival, Adams Academy. This year we have so far played only three games, but the showing of our team has not been satisfactory. I think most of us agree to that.” (“ You bet we do ! ” shouted a voice, and there was much laughter and applause.) “ Langton, who will speak to you next, has something to say as to the reasons for our ill-success. Meanwhile I think I have said enough to show you that there is sufficient reason for this meeting.”

“ Fellows,” said Rob, when the meeting had quieted down again, “ I can’t talk like Wellington. He ’s got me beat. But what I want to say is this. You know and I know that for the last two or three years the foot-ball teams we ’ve turned out have n’t represented — have n’t — hang it, they have n’t been the best

teams we could turn out, not by a long shot! And I challenge any one to deny it. Adams has beaten us four games out of five in the last five years, and she will do it again this year. That is n't right, and it is n't necessary. Now is it? "

" No! "

" You bet it is n't! Why, we 've got plenty of good material here at Riverport, just as good, every bit as good, as Adams has. But something 's wrong. Wellington said I was going to give my opinions as to what the matter is. Well, I 'm not. I 've got them, all right, but this meeting is n't called to find out what the trouble with the foot-ball team is. It 's called to decide whether it won't be a good idea to have an independent eleven that shall be representative of the school — to form an association for that purpose. I don't want you to think I 'm trying to be the whole thing here to-night, but I 've been kind of thinking it out and if you don't mind I 'll tell you my ideas. Then you can say what you think of them."

" Go ahead! "

" You 're all right, Lanky! "

" Let 's hear them! "

" Well, now suppose we form an association

to be called the Independent Football Association. We elect officers. Then we issue a call for candidates for a football team and appoint a temporary captain — ”

“ I suppose that ’ll be you, what? ” called Carter.

“ Cut it out, Carter! ”

“ Dry up or get out! ”

“ It ’ll be me if you want me,” responded Rob good-naturedly, “ but I guess you can find some one a lot better. We want a manager, too. Once we ’ve got going the manager will make some dates for us. It is n’t too late to get in, say, four or five games with other schools. There ’ll be no favoritism — ”

He was interrupted by loud and prolonged applause.

“ And every fellow who comes out for the team will get a fair show. We ’ll make the team up of the best players we can find, no matter whether they ’re personally known to the captain or man— ”

But Rob did n’t get any further, being drowned out by the howl of laughter which arose.

“ We ’ll have a coach, too. I know a fellow who will come up here for a month and be glad

to do it and not charge a cent beyond his board. And he knows football, too, a whole lot more than any of the rest of us ever will know. I'll tell you who he is when the time comes. We've been to see Doctor Farren and he says we can go ahead. And we've consulted Tom — I mean Mr. Osgood — and he thinks the idea is a good one. We can use the scrub gridiron for practice and when the School Team goes away to play we can use theirs. I don't say we can turn out a finished team this fall, because it's already the tenth of October, but we can have some mighty good sport and perhaps next year we'll be able to give the School Team something to think about. Now, then, what do you say, fellows? "

The project took the meeting by storm and confusion reigned supreme. But the sense of the meeting was evident, and Rob shot a satisfied glance toward Evan and Malcolm as he edged back to his seat on the window-ledge. Joe Law demanded recognition and finally got it. Joe was indignant and declared that he had never before witnessed the appalling spectacle of a school deliberately deserting its foot-ball team. Joe waxed eloquent and a good many foot-ball fellows present applauded.

“What happened the other day?” he demanded. “Why, a lot of you chumps stood down there on the field and hooted us. That’s no way to do! What if we did get licked badly by Mountfort? That game was n’t an important one. Why don’t you stand by us and help us find our pace and knock spots out of Adams? What good is it going to do to go and get up another team? What will the other schools think of us? They’ll think we’re a lot of — of — ”

“Who wrote your speech, Law?” piped up a voice that sounded like Mr. George Washington Jell’s; “Hopkins or Prentiss?”

“I’m not trying to make a speech,” cried Joe exasperatedly above the laughter, “I’m just trying to show you fellows what a lot of idiots you’re trying to be. Why, you can’t get up a foot-ball team, anyway! There aren’t eleven fellows to be had!”

“We can get up a better team than the First with six fellows,” growled Harry Pierce. Wellington interfered.

“I think we’d better get back to business,” he said. “Is it the wish of the meeting that the plan outlined by Langton be proceeded with?”

“ Sure thing! ”

“ Rah for Lanky! ”

“ Order! Order! ”

“ Then I suggest that you appoint a committee of, say, three fellows to take charge for the present and draw up a plan of organization. And since we have n't any time to lose I think we had better meet again to-morrow evening at the same time.”

“ Meet somewhere where we can all get in,” demanded a voice from the corridor.

“ That 's so. Maybe we can get the use of the rowing-room in the gym. The committee will post a notice in the forenoon and announce the meeting-place. Now if you 'll nominate three fellows to — ”

“ Langton! ” called a voice, and there was a general roar of approval.

“ Wellington,” called some one else and again the choice was unanimous.

“ Prentiss! ” suggested some one from the depths of the crowd about the doorway and received his reward of hoots and laughter. The third member was finally found in Harry Pierce, and as it was by that time close on eight o'clock, the meeting broke up. Rob remained behind with Wellington and Pierce and

the three arranged to get together in Pierce's room after study-hour. Evan and Malcolm walked back to Holden with Rob.

"Well, so far so good," said Rob with satisfaction. "I knew it would go all right, though, as soon as Wellington agreed to take a hand. The fellows think anything he goes in for is all to the good. At this rate we ought to have our first practice the day after to-morrow."

"But can we get enough fellows to make a team?" asked Evan doubtfully.

"Enough for two teams," replied Rob. "You wait and see."

The next evening there was a second meeting in the gymnasium and the Independent Football Association came into existence. Wellington was elected president, Malcolm Warne secretary and manager, Pierce treasurer and Rob temporary captain. It was voted to collect an entrance-fee of fifty cents from each member, the proceeds to be used in the interests of the team. Fifty-four fellows joined at the meeting. Mr. Osgood, the physical director, popularly known as Tommy, made a speech and was duly elected to honorary membership. Tommy said he was pleased to see such an interest in outdoor sports as appeared

to be developing at Riverport. He believed in athletics of all sorts and was of the opinion that fifteen minutes of work on the turf or cinder track was better than an hour in the gymnasium. Of course he cautioned them against giving too much attention to foot-ball to the exclusion of study.

“ The trouble is, I have found, that too many of you carry foot-ball and base-ball and rowing into the class-rooms with you. There ’s a time for everything and a place for everything. Athletics belong on the field and when you leave the field you ought to leave athletics too. Of course I don’t expect you to dismiss foot-ball entirely from your minds as soon as you ’ve had your shower; that would be expecting too much; but just see that when study time comes and when recitation time comes you put foot-ball out of your thoughts and get down to work. The year before last I had a student pass in a diagram of a foot-ball play in place of a chemistry paper. That sort of thing does n’t do.

“ And now one thing more,” continued Mr. Osgood. “ Doctor Farren has given his consent to this project, but he is n’t convinced that it ’s a good thing. He fears that there ’s going to be too much foot-ball around here. So you

understand that the project is on trial, fellows, and that you must not overdo it. Have a good time and get all the exercise you can out of it, but don't let it interfere with your real duties. That 's all, I guess, except that I want to remind all of you that go in for the team that you must come to me and be examined."

Mr. Osgood got his round of applause and then Rob was called on to tell the meeting about the coach he had spoken of the evening before.

" His name is Duffield," said Rob, " and he played with Brown last year and the year before that. He graduated last June. Some of you may have heard of him, although, as he was a tackle, he never got into the papers much, I guess. He was a good player and he 's a good fellow and knows a whole lot about the game. He lives in Providence and he can come down every day and go home again; it would only take him forty minutes on the train. He used to live in my town and I knew him when I was a kid. All he wants in case he does come are his expenses, that is, room and board and fares. As there are only about five weeks more of the season he would n't cost us much, I guess."

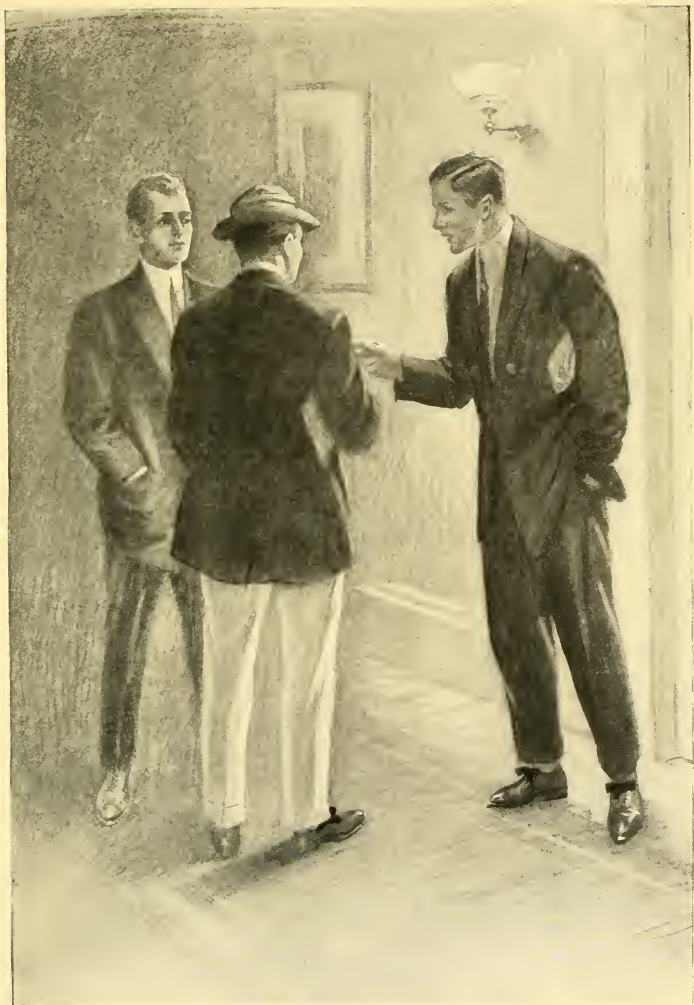
Rob sat down and one after another half a dozen fellows had their say. Two of them

thought a coach unnecessary, but as a whole the Association was heartily in favor of hiring Mr. Duffield. Finally the manager and captain were empowered to enter into negotiations with him and secure his services if in their judgment the Association could afford them. It was decided that fellows who made the team were to supply their own uniforms and that gray shirts and sweaters with the letters R. I. in green, signifying Riverport Independents, should be worn. The manager was instructed to arrange for as many games as possible for the remaining Wednesday and Saturday afternoons.

“ I think,” said Pierce, “ that as we won’t have much money after we ’ve bought footballs and paid the coach it would be well to arrange games only with teams that are willing to come here and play. Because I don’t see how we can pay car fares to visit other schools.”

“ We might have one game away from school,” suggested Malcolm, “ if it was n’t too far and the fellows could pay their own expenses.”

This produced a laugh, but it won applause as well, and Rob got the floor and declared that



“ ‘ IF WE DON’T MAKE HOP AND PRENTISS SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE
BEFORE THE SEASON ’S OVER, I’LL EAT MY HAT!’ ”

for his part he was willing to pay his expenses and those of one other fellow in a case of that sort. So it was decided that Malcolm was to induce teams to visit Riverport when possible and when not possible to make dates with them anyhow. Candidates were called for the following afternoon at four o'clock and the meeting adjourned subject to the call of the president, with every one feeling very well satisfied.

“ And now,” declared Rob on his way back to his room, “ if we can get Walter Duffield we ’re all right. And if we don’t make Hop and Prentiss sit up and take notice before the season ’s over I ’ll eat my hat! ”

CHAPTER XVIII

DUFFIELD TAKES HOLD

“**T**ALK about Falstaff’s army!” exclaimed Malcolm to Evan the next afternoon. “Did you ever see such an assortment?”

And Evan, rubbing his injured ankle reflectively and wondering whether it would stand an afternoon’s work, had to acknowledge, as he looked about him, that he never had. Practically every fellow who had joined the Independent Foot-ball Association had reported for practice. About half owned football togs and had donned them; the rest appeared in their old clothes and sweaters. There were old boys and young boys, big boys and little boys, tall boys and short boys, fat boys and slim boys. But, big or little, fat or slim, each was dominated by a splendid enthusiasm. Preparatory class youngsters shouldered their way about looking mighty important in immaculately new togs, while on the farthest edge of the group

stood a thin, diffident senior who had at last gathered courage to do what he had longed to do for three years — try to be a football hero.

“ Who ’s the fat kid over there? ” asked Malcolm. “ It is n’t Jelly, is it? I thought he was on the Second.”

“ He is — or was,” Evan replied. “ That ’s Jelly, though. O Jelly! ” And when Mr. George Washington Jell had ambled across, grinning radiantly; “ What are you doing here with the insurgents? ” Evan demanded. “ You ’re a traitor or a spy, Jelly; which is it? ”

“ I ’m a brand from the burning,” answered Jelly dramatically.

“ Have you left the Second? ” Malcolm asked.

“ Sure! Think I’m going to stay there and work for Hopkins? Not much! I handed in my resignation this morning to Gus.”

“ What did he say? ” asked Evan with a smile. Jelly’s round face reflected the smile.

“ I ’d rather not tell you,” he said. “ He tried to make out that I was deserting him, but that ’s nonsense, is n’t it? When you ’re on the Second you ’re working for Hop and Prentiss. That ’s why I quit.”

“ The Second will never be the same without you,” said Evan, shaking his head sorrowfully.

“ Oh, you fade away,” answered Jelly.
“ Where ’s Rob? ”

“ Somewhere about. There he is. I guess he ’s looking for you, Mal.”

“ Every one this way, please! ” called Rob.
“ Get into line and give your names to Warne. Got your book, Mal? ”

Malcolm, with Rob at his elbow, passed down the lines, taking the candidates’ names and entering them with particulars as to age, class and experience in his red memorandum book. After each name was entered Rob whispered “ One,” “ Two,” or “ Three ” into Malcolm’s ear and the manager set down the fateful number opposite the entry. As fast as a fellow gave his name he was sent into the field to make one of a ring of candidates whose duty it was for the present to pass the ball around. Afterwards the candidates were divided into three squads and for the rest of the afternoon they practised the rudiments of the game. Rob took the first squad himself, the second fell to Evan and the third to a middle class fellow named Brimmer. Enthusiasm began to wane among the inexperienced long before the hour was up.

This was to be expected, since passing and falling on the ball and sprinting soon grow monotonous and tiresome. But every one stuck it out until, at shortly after five, Rob let them go.

“ Well, what do you think? ” asked Rob when, later, the three friends were skirting the School gridiron on their way back to Holden.

“ I don’t know,” said Evan doubtfully. “ I don’t think there were many stars in my squad, while as for Brimmer, I thought he was going to throw up the sponge once or twice.”

“ Well, it ’s too early to tell much yet,” said Rob. “ There ’s some good material in my squad, though.”

“ I don’t think it will be hard to get eleven fellows out of the lot,” said Malcolm. “ Of course, I don’t know much about football, but I saw a good many chaps who seemed to know what to do and how to do it.”

“ That ’s right. I could pick a dozen to-morrow quite as good as the Second Team men. You wait until we ’ve had a week’s practice, Evan, and you ’ll feel more cheerful.”

“ Oh, I ’m cheerful enough. After all, we ’re doing it for the fun of the thing.”

“ H’m, yes, I suppose so,” answered Rob. “ But — well, I ’ve got more in view than just

fun. I 'm going to teach Hopkins and Prentiss a lesson; the whole school, too, for that matter. I 'm going to show folks that if you want a good football team or a good base-ball team you 've got to give every fellow a chance and not run the show for the benefit of a few of your particular chums."

"How about that coach?" asked Evan.

"Coming. I got him on the telephone this afternoon. He is n't going to cost us a cent, either. He says he 's just bought an automobile — a runabout — and he will come over every afternoon. Says it will only take him about thirty minutes and he 'd rather do that than live over here. I told him all about it, just what we were trying to do, and he thought it was a great joke and says he will fix us so we can knock spots out of the School Team! I 'm afraid he won't be so cheerful when he sees the material, but — well, never mind. I have hopes, fellows, that before long we 'll get some of the Second Team chaps."

"Gee, that would leave the First in a bit of a hole, would n't it?" murmured Evan.

"Serves them right," said Malcolm.

"Of course before that we 've got to show the making of a pretty good team," went on

Rob thoughtfully. "And the question is, can we do it? We're going to be pretty light, I guess, and so we'll have to make up for that in speed. Walt Duffield is the chap to show us how, though, I can tell you that!"

"We've already got one Second Team fellow," laughed Malcolm as they climbed the stairs. "You saw that Jelly had joined our forces, I suppose?"

"Yes. He was in your squad, wasn't he, Evan? How does he show up?"

"He's frightfully willing, he knows some football and he's got weight," answered Evan. "But he's as slow as an ice-wagon. If we can knock some speed into him I dare say he'd make a fair guard."

"My idea exactly," said Rob. "And that chap Brimmer is another good one. He ought to fit in at end. Then you'll play quarter and I'll have a try for half. There's four positions filled. For center there's Morse — or maybe Shaler. They both look fairly good. And we've got another good end in Powers. However, we'll leave it all to Duffield. If we're going to make this thing go we've got to give him full swing and do just as he says."

"When is he coming over?" asked Malcolm.

“ Monday. Come on in and let ’s look over your list, Mal; there ’s half an hour to supper yet. By the way, Evan, remind me to get Pierce up here this evening, will you? We ’ve got to get the fellows to pay their money into the exchequer before we begin cutting down the candidates. There ’s going to be a howl from some of them when they find they ’re not going to get on the team, and they might want to keep their half-dollars. And that would n’t do, for we need the money, my friends. We ’ll have to have that scrub gridiron marked out, Mal; we can’t play without the lines. We ’ll talk about that later. By the way, have you written for any games yet? ”

“ I ’m going to do that to-night,” answered Malcolm, “ and I wanted to ask you where I ’d better write.”

“ We ’ll go over that, then, after study. Now let ’s see those names. Pull up a chair. Evan, turn on the juice like a good chap. It certainly is getting late early these days! ”

On Saturday the School Team journeyed to Providence to play Bannard and the Independents used their gridiron while Malcolm and a dozen helpers marked off the scrub field with whitewash brushes and pails of lime. There

was a little signal work that day for the more advanced candidates, Evan handling the first squad and a middle class youth named Rogers playing quarter for the second. The work was decidedly encouraging, although somewhat ragged. The Second Team, with nothing to do, watched from the side-lines and had their fun, but it was all good-natured. Gus Devens told Rob that he was doing wonders and declared that he wouldn't have thought it possible to find eleven players as good as those in the first squad.

"Oh, we haven't started yet," answered Rob quietly. "Our coach comes Monday and after that things will take a brace. One thing we need, Gus, is a good guard. You'd better think it over."

Devens stared.

"Meaning me? I'd look nice, wouldn't I, throwing up my place and leaving the Second in the lurch in the middle of the season? You must be dippy, Rob."

"N—no, I don't think so. I guess they'd find some one else to take your place. You've been trying for the First for three years and you've got as far as captain of the Second. Maybe, if you stay where you are, they'll take

you on the First next year as a sub. Depends who falls heir to the captaincy, I suppose. You come over here and you can have a guard position and next year — ”

“ What about next year? ” asked Gus curiously.

“ You won’t tell? ”

“ No.”

“ Next year, then, you ’ll find yourself on the First.”

“ How do you mean? ”

“ I mean that this will be the First next year, of course.”

“ Oh, you ’re crazy, Rob. How do you figure that out? ”

“ Never mind how I figure it out, Gus. I ’m right. You wait and see. The school ’s back of this team, my friend, and the school ’s bigger than Frank Hopkins and Ed Prentiss. Think it over.”

“ Even so,” answered Gus, “ I ’m not the sort to quit my job now when having a good Second Team may mean winning the big game, and you know it, Rob.”

“ Yes, but let me tell you right now that two Second Teams can’t make Hop’s outfit win from Adams; and *you know that!* ”



“ ‘ NOW THEN, YOU FELLOWS, I’M HERE TO SHOW YOU WHAT I KNOW ABOUT FOOT-BALL,
AND YOU’RE HERE TO LEARN!’ ”

“ Well, it ’s my duty to stay where I am.”

“ All right. As long as you think that, Gus, you stay. When you change your mind, though, you mosey over to the other gridiron and we ’ll look after you.”

The School Team came home that evening with its third victory, having managed to win from Bannard with a score of 6 to 0. But the victory had cost something, for Tom Reid, left tackle and one of the strongest units of the line, had broken his collar-bone and would be out of the game for two weeks at least.

On Monday, which fell very close to the middle of October, Walter Duffield made his appearance at Riverport. Those who had expected a large, stern-visaged individual were disappointed, for the former Brown tackle was not over five feet nine inches in height and weighed under a hundred and sixty. He was twenty-three years old, but didn't look it. He had a smiling, alert face, curly brown hair, a pair of quiet brown eyes and a somewhat thin voice. He began proceedings by giving the candidates a talk on the grandstand, away from any possible eavesdropping on the part of the Regulars, as the Independents had grown to call the members of the First and Second Teams.

“ Now then, you fellows,” said Duffield, “ I ’m here to show you what I know about football and you ’re here to learn. That means that I say and you do. Any one who does n’t like that wants to run along right now. I ’m going to be It around here for the next month or so. You all understand that? All right. Now then, find your squads and let me see you handle the ball. Here, you fat boy, whatever your name is — What is it, by the way? ”

“ Jell.”

“ Well, Jell, you want to move faster than that or you ’ll go to sleep. Let ’s see you run. That ’s it! We ’ll make a sprinter of you yet. Where ’s your manager, Langton? How are you, Warne? Glad to know you. You stick with me this afternoon, please. I ’ll want to ask a lot of questions probably. Is that your Varsity Team over there? ”

“ Yes, School Team we call it, sir.”

“ What ’s the matter with them? Are they walking in their sleep? My, but I ’d like to be that quarter for a minute! All right. Now let ’s have a look at our own collection of wonders.”

CHAPTER XIX

DEVENS AGREES

FOR the first few days the Regulars regarded the doings of the Independents with amused curiosity. When Walter Duffield appeared on the scene curiosity continued but was richly leavened with resentment. The idea of those fellows having the services of a real coach while they had to get along as best they might with Hopkins, who, after all, knew no more football than many of the rest of them! The idea of the school turning its back on the regular team and lending its aid and support to a lot of renegades! It was disgusting and annoying. The Regulars said a good many hard things about the Independents those days, and there was more than one challenge given and accepted and more than one battle fought out down at the boat-house, which was the accepted place for the settlement of affairs of honor.

Frank Hopkins' attitude had so far been one

of amused tolerance. Prentiss, on the contrary, had let his chagrin get the better of his temper many times, and Rob and the others had heard at second or third hand many an unpleasant remark which had emanated from the manager of the School Team. So far, however, Rob had avoided controversy with either of them, although he and Joe Law had their arguments at almost every meal. On the Wednesday following the arrival of Duffield Rob encountered Edgar Prentiss in the corridor of Academy Hall. Rob was for passing on with a nod, but Prentiss stopped him.

"How 's the team getting on, Lanky?" he asked with an unpleasant smile. Rob didn't mind being called Lanky by fellows he liked, but resented it from Prentiss. So he answered rather shortly.

"All right."

"Hear you 've got a coach," pursued the other.

"Yes."

"Got about everything but players, have n't you?"

"We 've got those, too, Prentiss. If you don't believe it bring your team over some afternoon for practice. You 'll get it."

Prentiss pretended to think that a pretty good joke and laughed loudly. Rob kept his temper, although it was n't easy.

"Want a game, eh?" asked Prentiss. "I dare say. Well, we've got too much to do, Langton; like to oblige you, but we're busy."

"You bet you've got too much to do," answered Rob with enthusiasm. "If you're going to make a football team out of that aggregation of loafers you've got a whole lot to do. We don't want to play you; get that out of your head; we've got all the dates we can fill; only, if you really want to learn a little about the game you see Warne and if we have an open date we'll take you on. So long."

On the steps Rob came across another Regular in the person of Gus Devens. "Hello, Gus," he said. "Say, I was wrong the other day, was n't I?"

"I dare say you were, Rob, only I don't recall the particular occasion."

"When I said you would n't make the First Team. I suppose it spoils our chances of getting you to come over to us, but I'm glad of your luck. You deserve it, Gus; you've tried long enough."

Gus looked puzzled and a trifle uneasy, as though he suspected Rob's sincerity.

"What are you yawping about, Rob?" he asked.

"Why," answered Rob, looking surprised, "about you making the First Team, of course."

"Who said I 'd made it?" asked Gus glumly.

"Why — why, I don't know. Maybe I just naturally jumped to the conclusion. I knew that Tom Reid was out and, of course, you were the best man for the place. So I supposed —"

"Yes, you did!" Gus growled. "You need n't rub it in."

"Rub it in?" exclaimed Rob with a fine show of innocence. "Do you mean that Hop did n't take you to the First?"

"Not that I've heard of. He moved Ward over from right and put Little in Ward's place. I guess he knows his business, but I'm blamed if I don't think he might have given me a show, Rob."

"Rather!" exclaimed Rob warmly. "Why, Little can't play tackle! He can't play — pinochle! Did you say anything to him? Hop, I mean."

"Not likely. I'm not running his show. If he does n't want me he does n't have to have

me. But I 'm getting tired of his nonsense, I 'll tell you that."

" Little 's a rather good friend of Prentiss, is n't he? "

" I dare say. Came from the same town, I think. Gee, the way those two chumps run things makes me tired! Maybe you 'll see me bringing my doll-rags over to play with you fellows some day, Rob, after all."

" Well, don't do anything hasty," said Rob soothingly. " Maybe you 'll make it yet."

Gus laughed. " You 're foxy, are n't you, Lanky? See you later."

Gus hurried into Academy and Rob meandered toward Holden smiling contentedly.

The Independents stuck pretty closely to the rudiments of football for the first part of that week, but since there was enough experienced material in the ranks to form a first and second squad on Thursday Duffield, much to every one's surprise, held a ten minute scrimmage. The first squad was n't made up as Rob had anticipated. Evan was at quarter and Rob at left half, but Morse did n't suit Duffield as a center and of the ends Rob had selected only Brimmer found a place. The biggest surprise came when the coach put Jelly in at center. But

strange to say, Jelly took to the place like a fish to water, and, with Evan driving him and Duffield close on his heels every minute, showed evidence of real speed. The first squad as composed that day was as follows: right end, Cook; right tackle, Kasker; right guard, Chase; center, Jell; left guard, Koehler; left tackle, James; left end, Brimmer; quarter-back, Kingsford; right half-back, Lyman; left half-back, Langton; full-back, Shaler.

The work was pretty ragged that first day, but that was to be expected. Duffield scolded and threatened, and one would have thought to hear him take on that he was deeply disgusted with the material before him. Rob was certain of it and had visions of Duffield throwing up his position on the spot. And so, when at the conclusion of the afternoon's work, the coach called him aside, Rob was prepared for the worst. Duffield made him put his sweater on and then took him by the arm and led him to a seat on the old grandstand. For a full minute Duffield said nothing, only watched the First and Second Teams plugging away at each other on the farther gridiron, and Rob's heart sank lower and lower. At last, however, Duffield turned and spoke.

“ Well, Langton,” he said, “ I don’t see why we can’t turn out a pretty good team with that stuff.”

“ Wh—what? ” stammered Rob.

“ Why not? ” asked Duffield. “ We ’ve got good material; better than the average considering age. We ’re going to be light, but that is n’t anything to worry about. Take a light team and teach them the sort of plays that fit ’em and they ’ll hold their own with a team ten pounds heavier. I ’ve seen it time and again. Look at some of our teams at Brown; look at last year’s.”

“ That ’s so,” murmured Rob, wondering whether his face was expressing the relief he felt.

“ We ’ve got to be fast, though, Langton, almighty fast! We ’ve got to din speed into that bunch right along, every minute. If it comes to a choice between two men the man with ginger gets the job. You ’ve got a find in that chap Kingsford. Where ’d he fall from? ”

“ He ’s new this year. Came from Elmira and played up there on his grammar-school team.”

“ Well, how does it happen the other camp

did n't grab him? ” Duffield nodded toward the farther field.

“ The same old story,” answered Rob. “ They did n't give him a chance to show what he could do. They had him on the Second for a few days and then he hurt his ankle and they let him slide.”

“ They must be a fine set of chumps,” said Duffield disgustedly. “ We 've got good end material, too, Langton. Cook and that other chap — ”

“ Brimmer.”

“ Yes. They 're showing up pretty well already. Kasker 's a good man at tackle and Koehler 's another at guard. But the others in the center are n't much to boast of. Still, you can 't tell what a week of coaching will do. That little fat Jelly boy may make a good center. If he can learn to keep awake I think he will.”

“ You think he 's better than Morse? ”

“ Yes. Morse has n't any head. Football to-day needs head, Langton. Morse is the sort that will do what you tell him but he has n't any initiative; at least, that 's the way I size him up now. I may be mistaken. You 'll do at half all right, I guess, but you 've got to learn

to go harder and use your eyes. Lyman won't do, but he 'll have to stay until we can find some one better. At full-back: well, Shaler may be the one and he may not. It will depend on the kind of game we play. Taking the bunch in general though, Langton, it looks pretty good. But we may be pinched for substitutes. There are only three or four in the second squad that size up well. Powers is one of them and there 's another chap, a shock-headed boy, who played in the backfield to-day."

"That 's Tanner. He played full."

"Tanner? We 'll have to watch him. Well, you 'd better run along and get changed. I 'll see you to-morrow. By the way, I guess we 'd better cut down the bunch about Saturday."

"Yes, I suppose so. There 'll be a lot of kicking about that time." Duffield shrugged his shoulders.

"Let 'em kick. Has Warne found any dates yet? "

"He had n't got any replies when I asked him this noon. Maybe he 'll hear from some of them to-night."

"All right. See you to-morrow. You 'd better run up to the gym and get warm."

On Saturday the cut was made and all but

twenty-nine candidates were diplomatically informed that their further services would not be required. Rob's prediction proved true, for the disgruntled ones had a good deal to say. But they did n't find much sympathy except from each other. The School Team journeyed away from home that day and won a listless, poorly played game from Hope Hill Academy, 8 to 0. During their absence the Independents held practice on the School Team's gridiron and in the twenty minutes of scrimmaging the first squad scored twice on the second, once by straight line-plunging and once with the help of a blocked kick which Kasker captured and romped over the line with. On Monday Malcolm announced that he had arranged for three games, the first to be played the following Saturday with Cardiff High School, the second with Hillsgrove High at Hillsgrove the Wednesday after and the third with the Overbrook Academy Second Team three days later. The Cardiff game would be an ideal one for a first contest since Cardiff was not a strong team. The Hillsgrove game was possible enough because Hillsgrove was only three miles distant and the expense of getting there and back would amount to little. Rob wanted something better

than the Overbrook Second for the third contest, but, as nothing better offered, was forced to be content with it. On that Saturday the Overbrook First Team was coming to Riverport to play the School Team and the Overbrook Second would accompany it and take on the Independents as a side issue.

“ That leaves us one more Saturday and Thanksgiving Day,” said Rob thoughtfully. “ I ’d like to get a couple of rattling games for those dates, Mal.”

“ So would I,” answered Malcolm, “ but I don’t know where to look for them. Every team has its dates filled, you see.”

“ That ’s the dickens of it. We ’ll have a talk with Duffield to-morrow. Maybe he can suggest something.”

“ I wish,” said Jelly, who happened to be present at the time, “ that we could have a game before Saturday. That ’s a long time to wait, fellows. Could n’t we find someone to take us on Wednesday? ”

“ I ’m afraid not,” said Malcolm.

“ By Jove! ” exclaimed Rob. “ I ’ve got it! I heard that on Thursday the First ’s going to lay off and take a rest for the Mifflin game; they ’re going out on the bay or some fool thing

like that. Sounds like Prentiss, does n't it? Well, anyway, that leaves the Second with nothing doing. Suppose I see Gus Devens and ask him to play us a short game; say, fifteen minute halves? "

" Great! " said Evan, and the others agreed.

" But will he do it? " asked Malcolm. " Will Hop let him? "

Rob thought a moment.

" I think he will do it if he can. You leave it to me, Mal, and don't anyone breathe a word of it. I 'll see what can be done. Gee, fellows, but I 'd like to take a fall out of the Second! "

" We could lick them to death," declared Jelly stoutly.

" Well, we could try," said Evan. " I think we might be able to do them up, too."

" We won't do a thing to them! " breathed Rob softly and ecstatically.

The next afternoon, following the practice, the Independents held an election in the rowing-room of the gymnasium and made Rob permanent captain of the team. There were no other candidates for the honor and the choice was unanimous. The next evening, Wednesday, Rob called on Gus Devens after study-hour. Gus lived in Second House and shared his room

with Joe Law. Luckily for Rob's plans Law was not at home when he got there. After a few minutes of talk Rob remarked:

" I suppose, Gus, Hop and Prentiss make you do about as they want, don't they? "

" How do you mean? "

" I mean as regards your team. I suppose, for instance you could n't get up a practice game with another team without asking their permission." Gus viewed Rob speculatively.

" Meaning with your outfit? " Rob nodded. Gus considered. Then, " To-morrow, you mean? " Rob nodded again. Gus smiled. Then he laughed.

" They 'd be as mad as hornets, Rob, but I 'll do it if I can get the fellows together."

CHAPTER XX

INDEPENDENTS VS. SECOND

DUFFIELD shrugged his shoulders. "Sure," he said, "play 'em. But don't expect to win. That Second Team has been together all Fall and you chaps have n't played together once yet except in practice. But it 'll be good for you. What time?"

"Four-thirty," answered Rob. "The First Team and subs are going out on the bay. Prentiss and Hopkins think they need a rest."

"What they need," snarled Duffield, "is a stick of dynamite under 'em. Four-thirty, you said?"

"Yes, sir. Devens wants to wait until Hop and Prentiss get out of the way. He says the Second is crazy to play us."

"H'm; well, look out they don't use you up. Remember we 've got a real game the day after to-morrow. Better get busy now and run through signals for ten minutes or so."

A few minutes later Malcolm called the

coach's attention to the group of fellows assembling in front of Academy. "The First is getting ready to start, sir." Duffield followed the other's gaze and smiled cynically.

"They're not going to walk all the way to the village, are they?" he asked.

"Why, yes, sir, it's only a mile and a quarter by the fields."

"But in their condition!" said Duffield in simulated alarm. "They'll drop by the wayside, Warne! They ought to be trundled down in baby-carriages!"

Warne smiled at the thought of Merrill and Topham and the other big linesmen reclining in perambulators, and looked to find a reflection of his amusement in the coach's face, but Duffield had dived into the mass of boys ahead of him and was already busy shuffling them back into their positions.

"Now try that again and do it right," he commanded sharply. "These aren't parlor tricks I'm teaching you. Get into it as though you meant it. Get back, Langton, you're too near the line. The other half has to run in ahead of you, so give him room. Now, then, Kingsford, same play! That's better. Jell, you've got to double up better than that. Get

your head down so you can see just where the ball is going to when you pass it. Try the left shift, Kingsford."

The First Team and substitutes, some eighteen in all, moved across the Yard and down the meadow slope toward the village, and five minutes later the Second Team began to trickle out of the gymnasium. They had a few minutes' practice on the School gridiron and then Gus Devens walked across in search of Rob. The latter saw him coming and called a halt, and Duffield sent the first squad to the sidelines.

"All ready, Rob?" asked Gus.

"All ready. We'd better play over there, hadn't we? This field is pretty rough."

"I guess so," Gus replied. "Who's going to referee for us?"

"Anyone you say. How about Duffield?"

"He will be satisfactory to us, I guess. I suppose you know I'm going to get Hail Columbia for playing with you chaps?"

"I'll bet you are," laughed Rob. "Come on and meet Duffield."

The coach was extremely polite but not genial, and Gus felt somehow as though he were on the wrong side of the fence.

“ Will you referee, Mr. Duffield? ” he asked.

“ If you like. Want to toss now? ”

“ You call it, Rob.”

“ Heads,” said Rob. Duffield picked up the coin.

“ Tails,” he announced.

“ We ’ll take the west goal,” said Gus.

“ Second this way! ”

Two minutes later Koehler kicked off and the game was on. Peeble, the Second Team’s quarter, caught the ball and gained nearly twenty yards before he was downed. Then the Second began to make short but unpleasantly steady gains through Chase, who played right guard, and past James at left tackle. An occasional plunge at center netted little, for Mr. George Washington Jell proved a tough proposition. The ball crept down the field to the Independents’ thirty yard-line. There Devens and Peeble held a whispered consultation and on the next play Peeble tried a quarter-back run. But he chose the wrong side of the line and Brimmer, left end, nabbed him for a loss. With twelve yards to go and only two downs left Peeble sent the backs at the line again. But the Independents were encouraged by their momentary success and the gain was short.

Peeble was evidently at a loss, for he twice changed his signals and then consulted Devens.

"You're delaying the game," cautioned Duffield.

"Hinkley back!" called the Second's quarter, and the team arranged itself to protect the kicker.

"It's a fake!" cried Rob. "Look out for a forward pass!"

The ball went back to Peeble and he bounded to the side and poised himself for the throw. Then Brimmer squirmed through outside Devens and hurled himself on Peeble just as the latter sent the ball away. The pass was spoiled, Evan tipping it and then falling on it with half the Second Team writhing about him.

It was now the Independents' time to show what they could do at offense and Evan went at it hammer and tongs. The team, even in one short week, had learned speed, and the way the plays were pulled off was a veritable revelation to the Second. The backs were "knifed" through the Second's line time and again for gains of two and three yards, being stopped only when the secondary defence was reached. Rob distinguished himself that day as a line-plunging back. He went in low and hard and at



THE GAME BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENTS AND THE SECOND
SCHOOL TEAM.

top speed, and tore and squirmed and fought his way through, keeping his feet astonishingly. On the third down, time and again, it was Rob who took the ball and made the required distance, often with barely an inch to spare. Had the Independents possessed at that time any semblance of real team-play and rallied around the runner as they should have Rob's gains would have been considerably lengthened. But, even as it was, the ball was soon past the middle of the field and Devens and Peeble were imploring their men to hold, to "get low," to "break this up!" Almost down to their opponent's forty yard-line the Independents met a reverse. Lyman, right half-back, fumbled and the Second got the ball.

Peeble sent his backs at the Independents' line again, but now the latter had tasted battle, had got over any stage-fright they may have had at first and were fast learning what to do and how to do it. Two tries netted the Second but eight yards and Hinkley punted. Lyman, playing back with Evan, fumbled his catch but recovered it again, eluded a Second Team end and reeled off twelve or fourteen yards before he was brought down. There remained but a bare two minutes of playing time and Rob, after

he had torn off three yards and Shaler, full-back, had gained two more, punted the ball down to the Second's thirty-five. The Second sent Hinkley back again and returned the punt on the first down, relying, evidently, on another fumble in the Independents' back-field. But it was Evan who made the catch this time and who dodged at least half a dozen of the enemy and brought the ball almost to the middle of the gridiron. Then time was called by Warne who was combining the offices of time-keeper and linesman, and the teams trotted off.

Duffield followed his charges over to a sheltered position behind the old grandstand and saw them well wrapped in their blankets. Then one by one he drew the players aside and pointed out their mistakes. When it came Evan's turn he said:

“ You did pretty well, Kingsford, all things considered. But you slowed up a little toward the end. That 's what you 've got to guard against. I want you to drive the team just as hard in the last two minutes as in the first, harder if it can be done. Remember that the other team is as tired as you are, and perhaps a lot tireder. If they 're big and heavy, with a little too much flesh, they 're bound to be feel-

ing it more than you. That 's the time to snap it along, Kingsford. Now another thing: You 've got to use your wits. I know we 're hard up for plays as yet, but you can make what we have got go better if you study things a bit. Watch how each play works. If you send a back outside of end and find later that that end is playing wide and looking for another play of the same sort, why, jab a runner inside of him. Or if you find he is running in fast on plays directed at his end, take the ball yourself and try a wide end run. Don't get into a rut with your plays; keep them guessing every minute. That was a good run you made after your catch. With a little interference you might have got by. Try it again when you get a chance and don't let them crowd you too near the side-line. In the next half I want you to cut out the punting unless the other fellows have shoved you inside your twenty yards. You need n't be afraid of a field goal, I guess. When you do call for a punt see that your men are in their places and on their toes before you signal for the pass. If you get inside their twenty yards, Kingsford, hammer Langton and Shaler at their right guard. That chap 's soft and I think he will quit after you 've roughed

it up with him a few times. But leave him pretty generally alone until you 're where you can take it out of him. If you use him up early in the half Devens will put in a substitute, and I 'll bet the sub would be a harder proposition than the present chap. That 's all; except this: fast, fast, *fast!* "

Duffield slapped him on the shoulder and sent him back to the others. Then Warne announced that time was up and Duffield followed the men onto the field again. He had made no changes as yet in the line-up, for all the fellows had weathered the first half in good shape and he wanted them all to have a good taste of experience. By this time news of what was going on had reached the School and there was quite an audience strung along the side-lines, an audience palpably in sympathy with the Independents.

Devens had made but one change in his team, and Duffield and his charges were relieved to observe that the new man was not a right guard. He was a full-back, by name Putnam, and his one forte was kicking.

" That means that they 'll try for a field-goal if we give them the chance," whispered Rob to Evan as they took their places.

“ Then they must n’t have the chance,” answered Evan. “ Anyhow, they ’ve weakened their back-field, for Deering is a good man.”

Then Duffield blew his whistle, the Second’s center kicked off and the second half began. For the first six or eight minutes it was virtually a repetition of the preceding period. The ball changed hands a little more often, perhaps, for each team played together rather better and each rush line was stiffer. The half was more than half gone when the spectators got their first taste of excitement. The Second worked a pretty forward pass, quarter to left end, and left end went dodging and scampering over four white lines before he was laid low. That brought the pigskin to the Independents’ eighteen yard-line. A fake plunge at center with the runner cutting past tackle gained five yards and a mass-play on the right side of the line gained two more. Then Putnam was sent back and the Independents set their teeth and crouched low to get through and block at any cost.

Back went the ball and Putnam, rather nervous because he had not been used much as yet, dropped it in front of him and swung his long leg back. Toe and ball met, but Kasker and Jelly were through and it was Jelly’s ample

form that got between ball and cross-bar. There was a loud thump, a mingling of cries alarmed and triumphant and a wild scurry for the elusive oval. Up the field it bounded and trickled, and player after player hurled himself upon it only to have it slip from his grasp and begin a new series of gymnastics. It was the Second Team's left guard who finally captured it and by that time it was back past the thirty yard-line. The audience yelled approval and Rob thumped Jelly on the back and called encouragement. The catastrophe had unsettled the Second and in three downs the ball changed hands again.

"How much time is there?" called Evan.

"Almost six minutes," answered Malcolm from the side-line.

Then Evan snapped out his signals, Rob fell back as though for a punt and Evan skirted the Second's left end for a good twelve yards. Three plunges at the left of the opposing line gave them their distance again and the ball was just short of the fifty-five yard streak. Then came some pretty playing on the part of the Independents, while the spectators ran along the side-lines and cheered madly. Shaler, who had been used very little so far in the half was

given the ball time after time and went fighting through for a yard, two yards, three, sometimes even four. Three times the Independents made their distance on line attack. Then the measuring tape showed that they had failed, and, to Evan's despair, the ball went to the Second. On the threshold of the enemy's goal luck had turned her back!

But if luck can turn once it can turn again, and it did. After one ineffectual plunge at right tackle Peeble sent Putnam back. Again the Second's line failed to hold, and Putnam, with another blocked kick threatening him, swung hurriedly and the pigskin went hurtling out of bounds at the forty yards. Evan took up the fight again, sending Lyman outside of left tackle for a short gain and then winning the distance in two plunges at the tackle-guard hole on the left. The thirty yard mark passed under foot. The Second was getting slow now and Evan, with no mercy for his own tired men, sent his plays faster and faster. Gus Devens began to put in substitutes: a new man at left end, a new man at left guard, a new man at center. But Corbett, at right guard, remained and Evan sighed with relief. Nothing about Corbett suggested the quitter to Evan, nor did

the fellow seem soft, but Evan relied on Duffield's judgment. It was second down now and eight to go, and the ball was still a good five yards from the twenty yard-line. Evan pulled Rob aside and whispered to him. Rob nodded, glancing at the cross-bar of the goal. Then he went back, patted the ground and held his arms out. The team formed for defence of kicker. Back went the ball, but not to Rob, although that youth seemed to catch it and swing his leg at it. It went to Evan, and Evan doubled himself over it an instant and then, straightening up and dodging his way behind the battling lines, he found an opening and went spinning through and would have had a clear field to the goal-line had not Putnam redeemed himself and brought him down some fifteen yards short of the last mark. Pandemonium reigned along the side-lines. Duffield, inscrutable and impartial, allowed himself the ghost of a smile as he waved to Malcolm and announced "First down!"

Then, fighting like heroes, Rob and Shaler hurled themselves upon the Second's right guard and Duffield's prediction came true. Corbett gave, slowly at first, until, although the Second's back-field rallied behind him, he was

worse than useless and Devens, crying for time, sent him staggering off and put a new man in his place. The ball was inside the five yards then and the spectators were imploring a touchdown.

They got it.

Evan sent Rob again at the same place, and, although the new man was fresh and strong, and although the Second expected the play, the Independents went through. There was a wavering, indecisive moment, and then the defending line buckled inwards and the foe came swaying, falling through for a touchdown and the winning score.

CHAPTER XXI

DEVENS RESIGNS

THE victory was a popular one. Fellows who, left out of the teams under Hopkins and Rob, had been bewailing the fact that there were not enough players left in school to make up the usual dormitory elevens, forgot their grievance. How a team which had been formed scarcely more than a week could defeat the Second, composed as it was of veteran players, no one could comprehend.

“ And look here,” expatiated one enthusiastic junior, “ the Independents played the whole game through without a change in the line-up! Say, that coach must be a wonder! I’ll bet you that before the season’s over we can lick the School Team! ”

“ ‘ We! ’ ” scoffed a middler. “ Where do you come in? ”

“ I’m for the Independents,” replied the junior unabashed.

The news of what had taken place in their

absence met the First Team on the instant of their return just before supper-time and Hopkins and Prentiss piled over to Devens' room. Peeble, the Second's quarter-back, was there; he and Gus had been talking over the game; but Prentiss paid no heed to his presence.

"What 's this we hear, Gus?" he demanded angrily.

"I don't know what you heard," replied Gus calmly, "but the score was five to nothing; they missed the goal."

"So you did play those fellows, eh?"

"We did our best, but it was n't good enough."

"You must be crazy," broke in Frank Hopkins. "You know blamed well you had n't any right to do that. Your business is to give the School Team practice and not play games with other teams."

"Especially with that crowd of sore-heads!" added Prentiss.

"But, look here," said Gus mildly, "other schools let their second teams play real games. Why not here? As for 'sore-heads,' I don't know anything about that. Langton challenged us and we wanted a game; that 's all there was to it."

“ Why did n’t you say something about it to me, then? ” Hopkins demanded.

“ I was afraid you ’d raise a fuss,” answered Gus.

“ You bet I ’d have raised a fuss! And I ’m going to raise one yet! You need n’t think you can do what you please just because you ’re captain of that team, Devens. Langton and his crowd are doing all they can to make trouble for us, and you know it. You ’re a traitor, that ’s what you are! You don’t deserve to — to — ”

“ Look here, Hop,” Gus interrupted, “ you ’re not wearing any medals for giving folks what they deserve. I deserved a fair show on your team and I never got it. You don’t like me, and Prentiss does n’t like me. I ’ve played football here for two years; this is my third; and you ’ve got half a dozen worse players than I am on the First this minute. So don’t you spout about deserts.”

“ And this is the way you get even,” sneered Prentiss. “ Stab us in the back the moment we are n’t looking.”

“ Oh, come, let ’s be honest,” said Gus warmly. “ There is n’t any fair reason why the Second Team should n’t play another team

when it has a chance. It's just because the other team is the Independents that you're both sore. If it had been any other outfit you wouldn't have cared. Well, your quarrels aren't anything to me. The Second never has played with any team except the First, as far as I know, but there's no law against it. You go ahead and make all the fuss you want, but it's nonsense to stand there and call me a traitor."

"That's what you are," cried Hopkins, "a low-down traitor. And you've used your position as captain to make traitors of the rest of your team."

"That's not so, Hopkins," Peeble spoke up. "We didn't have to play. Gus told us about it and said we needn't play unless we wanted to. Every fellow went in on his own hook. For my part, I don't see what you're so hot about."

"I'm hot because you've helped Langton and his gang of trouble-makers," replied Hopkins wrathfully. "They aren't the School Team; they're just a lot of chumps who are sore because they didn't make it. And when you play against them you—you give them recognition and aid them."

Joe Law came in at that moment and looked

about the group curiously. Hopkins nodded to him and then turned to Prentiss.

“Come on, Ed.” But Prentiss was n’t ready.

“What ’s the good?” he demanded with an ugly scowl for Gus. “Let ’s settle it right now. I ’m manager of the team and I don’t propose to have my work spoiled like this.”

“We ’ll settle it all right,” responded Hopkins, “but not now. You ’ll hear from us later, Gus.”

“When you like,” answered Gus as they went out.

“What ’s the row?” asked Joe Law anxiously. Gus told him.

“Well, it was a funny thing for you to do,” said Joe. “You might have known he and Ed would n’t like it.”

“I did know it and I did n’t care. I don’t care now. The only thing he can do is to fire me and that won’t bother me a bit.”

But the discipline meted out to him the next afternoon was n’t just what he had looked for. When scrimmage time came Hopkins and Prentiss walked over to the Second Team.

“Gus,” said Hopkins, “I guess we can dispense with your services as captain after this.” Gus nodded, untroubled.

“Hover,” continued Hopkins, “you ’re captain from now on.”

Hover, the left half, glanced at Gus and then at his feet. “I ’d rather not, thanks, Hopkins,” he said.

Hopkins stared.

“You won’t?”

“No, I ’d rather not.” Hopkins turned angrily away.

“All right. It ’s up to you, then, Green.”

Green, the right tackle, nodded. He didn’t look as though he was anxious for the honor, but he said nothing. That afternoon the First had little trouble doing as it liked with the Second, but it was n’t because of any special brilliancy on the part of the First. After supper Gus Devens went over to 24 Holden. Both Hopkins and Prentiss were in.

“I don’t believe you have any right to depose me, Hopkins,” said Gus.

“I ’ve got every right,” answered Hopkins.

“I appointed you, didn’t I?”

“Yes, but I have an idea that if I take the matter to faculty they ’ll decide against you.”

“Try it,” challenged Prentiss.

“Well, I ’d thought of it, but I guess I won’t. Instead of that I ’m going to get out.”

“ Oh! ” said Hopkins uneasily.

“ A good idea,” was Prentiss’ fling. “ Perhaps you ’ll join the sore-heads.”

“ Perhaps. Anyway, I ’m done with you chaps.” And he turned on his heel and went out, leaving Hopkins looking a trifle blank.

“ I don’t like that,” said the captain.

“ Pshaw! ” responded Prentiss. “ He won’t be missed.”

“ No, perhaps not, although he is a mighty good player, Ed, and you know that. But suppose he makes a row and gets some of the others to go with him? ”

Prentiss considered the possibility for a moment in scowling silence. At last:

“ We ’ve got to do something, Hop,” he announced. “ Look here, why not see what can be done with Langton? They say he played a wonderful game at half yesterday, and we could use another half on the First.”

“ I don’t believe he ’d come,” said Hopkins.

“ I ’ll bet he will, though. He ’s always wanted to make the team. Why, what do you suppose he started these Independents for, you idiot? He thought you ’d buy him off, of course! ”

“ I don’t believe so.”

“ I tell you he did. And there are others on that team we might use. We could promise them places on the First and use them as subs; let them into a game for a minute or two; all they want is their letters. There ’s that fellow Chase; and Koehler; and — how about Kingsford? ”

“ Oh, he would n’t. He hates me like sin; you too, I guess. He has n’t forgotten that hazing, I suppose. Never sees me any more. They say he ’s got the making of a good quarter, too. I guess we got too funny with him, Ed.”

“ Well, let him go, then. You see Langton and I ’ll talk with the others. And we want to do it right away; to-night is n’t a bit too soon. Come on.”

“ Well, I ’ll see him, but I don’t want to, and I don’t believe it will do any good.”

Hopkins found Rob at home, but Evan and Malcolm were with him. Hopkins had n’t entered Number 32 since he had sent Evan spinning through the doorway on that first day of school and he found himself confronted by three surprised countenances. Rob, however, was politeness itself.

“ Hello, Hop! Come on in. Sit down if you

can find anything to sit on. How 's it going? Going to kill Mifflin to-morrow? "

" Oh, I fancy we 'll win without much trouble," answered Hopkins easily. " It was in regard to that, in a way, that I wanted to see you. I 'd like your advice, Rob. Want to come down to my room a moment and let me explain? "

" Sure," replied Rob. " Come on." As he passed Evan he dropped the lid of his left eye in a portentous wink. In 24 Hopkins placed him in Prentiss' easy chair. Hopkins could be very pleasant when he wanted to be and now he was as sweet as sugar.

" Look here, Rob," he began, " things are n't going very well on the team — "

" You mean the School Team? " asked Rob innocently.

" Yes. We 're badly off for back-field players. Of course Law is all right and Simpson is fair, but Leary and Hansford are n't what they ought to be, and — well, in short, Rob, we need a good man there, a rattling good half-back."

" I guess they 're hard to find," murmured Rob.

" You bet they are. Prentiss and I were

talking it over a while ago and wondering what we could do to strengthen up there. Well, we've heard what a good game you put up against the Second yesterday and Prentiss thought — or, well, maybe I suggested it first — that perhaps you'd like to see what you could do on the School Team."

"Mighty nice of you," said Rob calmly.

"Why, no, it is n't, Rob. It's pure selfishness. We need a good half-back and that's you. I suppose you're having a good deal of fun with that outfit of yours, but, of course, it does n't lead anywhere. You come to the First and you'll get into three big games and have your letters. Now, what do you say?"

"Well — of course —" began Rob hesitatingly, "I've always wanted to make the School Team. I tried pretty hard last year, you know, Hop."

"I know you did. You did mighty well, too, but last year we had so much good back-field material that I could n't find a place for you. I tried hard, too."

"I thought that was the way of it," answered Rob gratefully. "You know there are fellows who accuse you and Prentiss of — well, of

favoritism, Hop, but I dare say that's not fair."

Hopkins looked uneasy, but Rob's face was blankly innocent.

"They don't know what they're talking about," said the captain with a fine show of indignation. "I tell you, Rob, it's no snap being captain and coach and everything. You know something about it yourself, I guess, don't you?"

Rob nodded emphatically. "It's no cinch," he granted. "Now as to what you suggest, Hop; the principal trouble is here. You see I've made that team up and I don't want to disappoint the fellows. Of course, they *might* get on without me for awhile, but — you know how it is when —"

"Yes, but it doesn't seem to me that it would matter much if the team disbanded after awhile, Rob."

"N—no, but I don't like to leave the fellows in the lurch. Besides, I don't know what they'd say."

"They could n't say anything," said Hopkins heartily. "And, look here, we can use two or three or maybe more good men. Of course I could n't promise them regular positions on

" THEN THAT'S SETTLED, EH? " ASKED HOPKINS BEAMINGLY.



the First, but they 'd be certain of getting their letters and I 'd put them with the subs and use them whenever I could. In fact, Rob, Prentiss and I had already spoken of two or three of your fellows we could find places for."

" Really? Who are they? "

" Well, Chase was one, and Koehler was another, and—I don't just remember who the other one was."

" There 's Shaler," Rob suggested. " He 's a mighty good line-smasher. And Kasker 's a good tackle."

" All right. Anyone else? "

" No, I guess not."

" Then that 's settled, eh? " asked Hopkins beamingly.

" What? "

" Why, that you 'll come to us and that the others we spoke of can come if they want to."

Rob dug his hands into his pockets, stretched his legs out from under his chair and grinned across at Hopkins.

" No, Hop," he said, shaking his head, " the only thing that 's settled is that you 're a good deal of a rascal and much more of a fool than I took you for." He got up. " I might forgive you the first, Hop, but I hate a fool."

“ You — you won’t! ” gasped the other, surprise and dismay and anger struggling for supremacy. Rob shook his head again, gently and smilingly.

“ Not likely,” he answered. “ When I join your side-show, Hop, the snow will be twelve feet high in the Yard and the weather extraordinarily chilly. And now, I think, I’ll just drop in on Koehler and those others we mentioned. And I wouldn’t be surprised to find Prentiss somewhere around. Good-night, Hop.”

CHAPTER XXII

THE SCHOOL TAKES A HAND

THE next afternoon, Saturday, foot-ball representatives of Riverport School played two contests. The First Team met Mifflin School and the Independents went up against Cardiff High. For the latter contest Duffield made a few changes in his line-up. Talcott replaced Chase at right-tackle, Powers superseded Cook at right end and Pardee went in for Lyman at right half. Pardee was an improvement, and the same might be said of Powers, but Talcott did n't fit and Chase was put back in the second half. The periods were only twenty minutes long, and, although Cardiff had wanted them twenty-five, they were long enough to prove the superiority of the Riverport Independents. Cardiff was plainly surprised, for she had come over expecting to pit herself against a team of very small calibre. She began the game with five substitutes, but they

were soon replaced with regulars. In the first half the Independents had no difficulty in scoring twice and in the last period they crossed Cardiff's goal-line once, the final score being 16 to 3, the visitors having made a very creditable goal from placement. Duffield relied on straight foot-ball; in fact, the team as yet knew little else; and all three touchdowns came as results of line plunging varied occasionally by an end run. Of the touchdowns Rob scored two and Shaler one. The School divided its attention between the two games, but what cheering was done was mostly for the Independents. The Cardiff game was over long before the School Team was through with Miffin, or perhaps I should say before Miffin was through with the School Team, and most of the Independents saw the last fifteen minutes of that game.

Hopkins' players were plainly in the midst of a bad slump, for even in the first game of the year they had not played so listlessly or with so little gumption. Miffin made them look very small before she was through with them, piling up twelve points in the first half and sixteen in the second. The spectators saw the contest come to an end with scant display of

interest; the defeat was so overwhelming that censure would have been flat and unprofitable. Silence alone seemed appropriate. Rob and Evan were moving away from the field when the First Team members, having cheered Mifflin after a fashion, trotted by toward the gymnasium. Rob caught Hopkins' eye as the latter passed and received a vindictive scowl. He smiled.

"I wonder," he said to Evan, "by what process of reasoning Hop holds me responsible for to-day's defeat."

"Does he?" asked Evan, falling into step beside his chum.

"Well, he looked at me as though he did. Jove, Evan, did you ever see such dumb football in your life? Why if we had been in Mifflin's place to-day we could have wiped the field up with the First. Gee, I wish we had a chance at Hop's pets!"

"Let's challenge them," laughed Evan. Rob didn't respond to the laugh. Instead he remained very thoughtful as they made their way back to school, and Evan, seeing his expression, knew that Rob was pondering something. It was the sort of expression worn by him during the process of evolving one of his

marvelous inventions. Evan wondered what it was to be this time; whether a monkey-wrench or an air-ship. Of late Rob had been far too busy with football affairs to find time to invent anything.

On Monday there was a sensation. The Second Team had learned by that time of Gus Devens' withdrawal and when the team reported on the field that afternoon it was minus ten members, seven of them first string men and three of them substitutes. Green, the newly appointed captain, was two men short of a team!

Prentiss was fairly beside himself with wrath, while Hopkins seemed suddenly to realize that things were going against him and appeared thoroughly discouraged. But two First Team substitutes were placed with the Second and practice was held as usual and went badly. On Tuesday Gus Devens and the eight deserters from the Second reported to Coach Duffield, the Independent Football Association having meanwhile received nine new members and its treasury the sum of four dollars and fifty cents.

"I can't promise you fellows positions," said Duffield, "but I'll give you all fair trials."

“ That ’s all we ask,” answered Peeble cheerfully.

The next day the Independents journeyed to the neighboring town of Hillsgrove in three big coaches to play the High School team. The expense of that trip made a big hole in the resources of the Association and Treasurer Pierce confided to President Wellington that if they did this sort of thing again the treasury would be plumb empty.

Devens replaced Talcott at right guard and strengthened that side of the line tremendously. In the second half Duffield, in spite of the fact that Hillsgrove was leading 11 to 6, tried out numerous candidates. Peeble went in for Kingsford at quarter and did fairly well, but seemed unable to get speed into the team. A number of new plays were tried with varying success, but when the last whistle blew the score still stood 11 to 6 and the Independents had met their first defeat. But Duffield did n’t seem to mind.

On Saturday Overbrook Academy brought her First and Second Teams to Riverport and met her Waterloo. Hopkins’ men braced up and barely managed to get the better of their opponents, 6 to 0. The Independents toyed with

the Overbrook Second for fifty minutes and ran up 33 points to their opponents' 5. They had mastered the new plays and had developed a very respectable amount of team-play. The back-field had been strengthened by the substitution of Deering, formerly of the Second, for Pardee at right half and the center of the line, with Devens at right guard, Jell at center and Koehler at left guard was invulnerable to anything Overbrook had to offer in the way of attack. In the second half of the game Duffield sent in what was almost a new team and demonstrated the fact that he had good substitute material for well-nigh every position. The second string backs, Hover, Hinkley and Tanner, made a strong combination, especially when an open game was played. Hinkley was a clever punter and Duffield believed he could develop him into a good drop-kicker.

The consensus of opinion after the contests were over credited the Independents with having shown more foot-ball and better foot-ball than the School Team and fellows began to express the wish that the former team and not the latter was to meet Adams Academy on Thanksgiving. As one boy put it: "The Independents are just as much our team as Hopkins'

bunch is, and they 're a whole lot better. Why should n't we put our best team up against Adams? Gee, I 'm sick of getting licked every year; I 'd like a change! "

The Independents came fast the next few days. The discouraging thing was that only ten days remained until Thanksgiving and the close of the football season and that in spite of all efforts Malcolm had been unable to find any more games. Bannard School had offered to play them the Saturday after Thanksgiving, but when Malcolm had asked for an extension of the season the faculty had refused. But there was next year to think of, and meanwhile there were battles royal every afternoon between two very even elevens, and Rob had not given up hope of finding one more foe to demolish.

On Wednesday the news spread through school that the Independents had challenged the School Team to a practice game the following Saturday, on which day, following established custom, the School Team had no contest, preferring to give all her time to perfecting herself for Adams. The news was hailed with delight and the School waited impatiently to hear the outcome. When it was learned that the

School Team had declined the challenge there was a veritable howl of disapproval. Rob had little to say in public, but there were frequent conferences in Wellington's room, and on Thursday morning there was a notice in Academy Hall announcing a mass meeting to be held that evening "to discuss the foot-ball situation." The notice was signed by prominent members of the four classes.

The assembly-hall was full when Northrup of the senior class called the meeting to order. The rival foot-ball coteries were there in full attendance, Rob and Wellington and Pierce and Malcolm and their associates grouped together on one side well toward the front and Hopkins and Prentiss with their supporters sitting across the hall. Northrup began by explaining that the meeting had been called on account of a general sentiment favoring an open discussion of the foot-ball situation. "We have," he said, "two teams here now, the School Team and a second team known as the Independents. I'm not a player and don't pretend to know a great deal about the game, but as far as I can learn the Independents are doing better playing than the other team. A week from to-day we meet Adams and, as you all know, Adams has been

beating us right along of late. So the suggestion has been made that it would be well for us to put against them the strongest team we have, whether that is the so-called School Team or the Independents. And it has been further suggested that in order to determine which is the better team a game be played between them on Saturday."

Northrup sat down amid loud applause. Wellington followed and spoke to like intent, and was in turn followed by three others, a senior and two middle class fellows. The meeting was clearly in favor of the plan outlined by Northrup and when some one demanded that the captains of the two teams be asked to speak there was much clapping of hands and stamping of feet. Hopkins got up and claimed recognition.

"We all want Riverport to win the game," he began rather listlessly, "and I think she will."

Mild applause greeted this, while some one at the back of the hall called "That 's what you said last year!"

"But as captain of the School Eleven I resent this interference by — " he glanced across the hall — "by a lot of disgruntled fellows who

have formed what they call a foot-ball team and who all this Fall have been doing all in their power to make trouble for me and my management and my team."

"It is n't your team!" called a voice.
"It's the School's team, Hop!"

"It's nonsense to suppose that a team that has played together no longer than this Independent team has can face Adams and — and win. As for playing the Independents, why, we're willing enough to do that —"

This announcement met with a storm of approval.

"I mean," corrected Hopkins with some embarrassment, "that we would be willing to if it was n't that we shall need all the time that is left to us to get ready for Adams."

"You bet you will!" yelled Jelly from a front seat.

"The School Team is the only team that has the right to represent the School in contests with other schools and I insist on that right. And I hope you fellows will stand by me and — and my team, and help us to a victory."

It was a weak effort and even Hopkins himself seemed to realize the fact. There was some

scant applause and then some one called "Langton! What 's he say? Where 's Langton?" and Rob got to his feet and faced the meeting with a confident smile on his face.

"All I 've got to say," he announced, "is that we think we 've got a team that can put it all over the School Eleven. You fellows have seen us play and you know pretty well what we can do. Whether we could beat Adams I don't know, but I think we could. Anyway, we 'd like mighty well to try. For our part we 're more than willing to play the School Team on Saturday, or any other day they like, and abide by the results. If they win let them play Adams, if we win let us do it. Seems to me that 's fair. We all want to win that game, and I don't see that it 's going to matter much whether the Independents or the School Team turn the trick. The main thing is to get revenge on Adams for the drubbings she 's been giving us."

"Do I understand," asked Wellington, when he could make himself heard, "that Hopkins refuses to play the Independents?"

There was a moment of silence, and then Prentiss sprang to his feet.

“ No,” he cried, “ he does n’t. We ’ll play the Independents on Saturday and show you fellows which is the better. And then, perhaps, you ’ll be satisfied and quit trying to queer things. All I ’ve got to say is that this school has got a mighty funny idea of how to go about to win a foot-ball victory! If you ’d stand by your team instead of trying to bust it up — ”

But he was n’t allowed to get any farther and the meeting broke up in confusion.

“ Well, we ’ve done it,” chuckled Rob as he tossed his cap across the room. Malcolm closed the door of 32 and then the transom. Evan looked at him inquiringly.

“ Prentiss prowls around a good deal,” he explained, “ and if the transom ’s open you can hear beautifully.”

“ What he would hear outside this door would n’t matter, I guess,” said Rob. “ Gee, fellows, I ’m tickled. I thought we might get this far next Fall but I never dreamed we ’d do it now. If we beat them we play Adams. Think of that, Evan, you unenthusiastic beggar! ”

“ I ’m thinking of it,” answered Evan.

“ “ I ’m thinking of it! ” ” mimicked Rob.
“ Well, why don’t you *say* something? Why



"THE MEETING BROKE UP IN CONFUSION."

don't you — why don't you do something? I don't expect any signs of emotion from Mal; he's the original human icicle; if Peary had seen him first he'd have saved himself a long trip. But you might at least look interested."

"I'm just wondering what's going to happen to us Saturday," Evan replied. "It's all well enough to talk, Rob, but those fellows have it on us in lots of ways."

"Well, how, Mr. Gloom?"

"In size and weight, for one thing."

"Yes, that's one weigh," Malcolm interpolated. Evan threw a blue book at him, but missed.

"Yes, they have us there," said Rob, "but we even that up by speed. Go ahead."

"Well, but do we? If they can stop our end plays and spoil forward passes, our speed won't count for so much. We'll never be able to get through their line for consistent gains."

"Why not? Other teams have. Why, that center trio of theirs is n't so much. All they've got is weight. If we get the jump on them we'll have them on the run in no time. And as for spoiling our forward passes, why, that's easier said than done."

“ Anyway, we need a dry field,” said Evan.
“ If it ’s a wet day it ’ll be all up with us.”

“ For goodness sake shut up! You ’ve got us beaten now by about ten scores,” laughed Rob. “ Don’t you get stage-fright, Mr. Quarter; we need your services. You take my word for it, Evan, that we can lick them. Just wait and see.”

“ I guess I ’ll have to. What do you think about it, Mal? ”

“ Oh, I don’t know much about football,” said Malcolm modestly, “ but I think we ought to win if only on psychological grounds.”

“ I beg your pardon? ” asked Evan with elaborate deference.

“ Just listen to him! ” sighed Rob admiringly. “ Is n’t he the boy wonder? Prithee, Mr. Webster, elucidate.”

“ Oh, you know what I mean.”

“ We know — oh, yes, we know all right, Mal! It is n’t that we don’t catch your drift. Psychology is an open book to us; in fact, my young friend Evan here got out the first patent on psychology. But it ’s been greatly improved since then, and so — ”

“ Shut up,” laughed Evan. “ What are you talking about, Mal? ”

“ Well, I mean that the — the mental condition of a person counts for a lot, the condition of his mind, you know. And — ”

“ You ’re mixed,” said Rob. “ But go ahead; a short lecture on mental philosophy by Professor Warne. The class will please come to order and Mr. Kingsford will remove the bent pin from the Professor’s chair.”

“ Don’t mind him, Mal. Go ahead.”

“ Silent contempt for yours, Rob. I mean just this; Hop and Prentiss and his whole team are worried. They ’ve been losing games right along; they haven’t got together once the whole season and they know it. They ’re — they ’re disrupted — ”

“ Fancy that! ” murmured Rob.

“ And they have n’t confidence. On the other hand — ”

“ Is an ink-stain,” said Rob. “ It ’s unkind to draw attention to it, nevertheless, Professor. I assure you that I ’ve tried pumice — ”

“ Oh, cut it out, Rob! ” begged Evan.
“ Mal ’s right about it.”

“ On the other hand,” went on Malcolm, “ our team has plenty of confidence, we are n’t worried and we believe we ’re going to win.

We have public opinion on our side, too; the School believes that we are going to win — ”

“ Every one except Evan,” muttered Rob sadly.

“ And all that counts for us,” said Malcolm. “ You take two fellows, one cheerful and confident and another worried and doubtful, and other things being equal the first fellow will win out every time. It ’s the same way, I reckon, with foot-ball teams.”

“ That ’s so,” agreed Rob soberly. “ And that crowd is surely worried and up in the air. As for Prentiss — say, Gus told me to-day that the management ’s in debt about forty dollars already and they can’t get the fellows to shell out. And Hop ’s as blue as an Adams sweater. I ’m almost sorry for him.”

“ Huh! ” scoffed Evan. “ You ’d never be sorry for a chap until you had him down and was kneeling on his collar-bone.”

“ Wrong. I ’d be sorry, but I would n’t let it interfere with my duty. And I ’m not going to now. My duty is to show Hop that he was never intended for a Napoleon or a Julius Cæsar. It will be a helpful lesson for him and may save him mistakes when he gets to college. And now I ’m going to bed, for to-morrow is

going to be a very, very busy day. Thank you, Professor, for your few well chosen remarks. What have you got to say now, Evan? With psychology rooting for us I guess we 've got the game cinched this minute, eh? "

" Um, maybe; but I 'd swap the psychology for another sixty pounds in the line! "

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INDEPENDENTS DISSOLVE

THE Saturday before Thanksgiving dawned bleak and gray and cold and by three o'clock, for which hour the game between the School Team and the Independents was set, there was a biting north wind blowing across the field and the heavy clouds were scurrying overhead. It was football weather, and only the spectators found fault with it. On the sidelines it was chilly waiting, and fellows wore their heaviest clothing and stamped up and down to keep warm.

There was a hearty cheer for the Independents as that team trotted down from the gymnasium and squirmed through the line of impatient students, and a less enthusiastic one for the School Team when it followed a minute or two later. The teams warmed up for ten minutes and then Mr. Osgood, who had accepted the office of referee, summoned the captains to

the center of the field. Rob won the toss and took the east goal and a minute later the play began.

For the first few minutes the School Team had the better of it, the Independents' plunges at the line being stopped without great difficulty. Three downs failed to net the distance and the ball went to the School Team on the opponent's forty yards. An attempt at the center brought no gain and Law punted. Deering caught the ball on his fifteen yards and made ten across the field before he was downed, Evan interfering brilliantly for the runner. The Independents tried the School line again and again lost on downs, this time by a bare half-yard. The School Team made first down with three plunges through the wings and things looked bad for the defenders of the east goal. But on their fifteen yards the Independents held stubbornly and recovered the ball, and on third down Deering punted to mid-field. The ends were under the pigskin all the way and Miller, School quarter, was downed for no gain. After that, for the rest of the twenty minute half, the ball see-sawed back and forth between one thirty yard-line and the other. There might have been a field-goal tried on

each side had the wind been less strong. Under the circumstances neither team thought it wise to make the attempt.

Gus Devens played opposite Frank Hopkins and the audience watched the battle with keen relish. Perhaps Hopkins had a shade the better of the argument, for Gus was new at guard position. At center Jelly and Merrill were pretty evenly matched, although Jelly's passing was more certain. The School Team's line was pounds heavier to a man than their opponents, but, as Rob had predicted, the latter evened accounts by being much faster. On the whole, in that first period, the teams showed up about on a par, and it was evident that, barring flukes, neither team was likely to score on its opponent by straight foot-ball. There were a few fumbles on each side, but none proved disastrous. The half ended with the ball on the Independents' thirty-seven yards in School's possession.

The School Team trotted back to the gymnasium for the intermission, while Duffield conducted his charges down to the boathouse. There were a few minor injuries to be attended to, for the School players had been none too gentle. Jelly was blissfully proud of a swollen nose, Shaler had a cut over one eye and Powers

had wrenched his shoulder. There was a five minute lecture by the coach and then they trotted back to the field.

The second half was different from the first, and the spectators knew that it was going to be from the very moment that the Independents got the ball on a fumble some three minutes after play started. Evan began to work the School's ends, sending the runner outside of tackle for gain after gain until Hopkins found his wits and sent the backs to the rescue. Then came a short forward pass, Deering to Powers, and a twelve yard advance. Plunges at center helped but little, but Shaler got through right guard on a split-play for four yards. An on-side kick worked to perfection, and, while the audience shouted wildly, the two teams lined up on the School's twenty yard-line. But a wide end run netted no gain, a plunge at right guard, with Shaler carrying the ball and the whole back-field behind him, realized only four yards, and then Deering fell back for a try at goal. The pass was good and the line held well enough, but the wind was too much for the kicker and the ball went wide.

School elected to put the ball in scrimmage from her twenty-five yards. Law and Simpson

and Leary hammered the Independents' line for short gains, but although they were able to get by the forwards the second defence piled them up. They made the distance once and then, with three to go on third down, Miller tried a quarter-back run and was thrown by Brimmer for a loss.

The Independents took up the march again, playing wide-open football and mingling line plunges with forward passes, delayed runs, fake kicks and other plays that made School's head swim. It was brain against brawn now, and in the end brain won. Duffield had given his team plays that Hopkins had never thought of and had n't the slightest idea how to meet. The forward passes succeeded time after time, and when, down on the School Team's thirty yards, Deering, standing back as though to try for a field-goal, passed the ball across to Rob and Rob threw it straight down the field into Powers' waiting hands, there was no one near to stop the latter youth when he skipped nimbly over the goal-line and made the first and only score of the day.

Deering kicked goal, and after that it was all up with the School Team. Hopkins put in sub after sub in the hope of stemming the tide of

defeat but all to scant purpose. In the last ten minutes the Independents seemed on the brink of a second touchdown after Evan had skirted the School's left end for a twenty-odd yard run. But on the first play, the ball being then on School's eighteen yards, Hover, who had taken Rob's place at left half, fumbled and Reid fell on the ball. School punted out of danger and time was called before the Independents were again within striking distance of the opponent's goal-line. Science and team-play (and, perhaps, psychology!) had won the day.

Things seethed that evening. There were rumors and counter-rumors. Hopkins refused to stand by the agreement made in mass-meeting; Hopkins had resigned the captaincy; Hopkins had quarreled with Prentiss and was going to join the Independents; Prentiss declared he was going to appeal to Doctor Farren; the School Team had dissolved after the game; Prentiss was so angry he would n't speak and was going to leave school. It was all very breathless and exciting and since there was no study-hour on Saturday night, the fellows were free to discuss the rumors to their hearts' content. Meanwhile in Mr. Osgood's study a conference was under way. Present were the in-

structor, Hopkins, Prentiss, Wellington, Rob and Malcolm. Hopkins was depressed and discouraged, Prentiss silent and sullen. Hopkins however was ready to abide by the results of the game and, with Mr. Osgood acting as arbitrator, matters were soon settled. Coach Duffield was to have supreme authority. The Independent Football Association was to be disbanded at a meeting to be held Monday evening and the Independent first team and substitutes were to join the School Team. Hopkins was to remain captain, but since it was doubtful whether he would play in the Adams game save as a substitute for Koehler, Rob was to be field captain. Members of Hopkins' team would be used in the Adams game whenever practicable, and those who did not get into that contest but had played against Overbrook were to receive their letters. Prentiss was to remain manager and Malcolm was to be assistant manager until the next election was held. At the end of an hour the conference broke up quite amicably, both Hopkins and Prentiss being glad to retain their positions and realizing that the Independents had used them leniently. The School in general was well satisfied with the arrangement when it learned of it, the Independents claiming

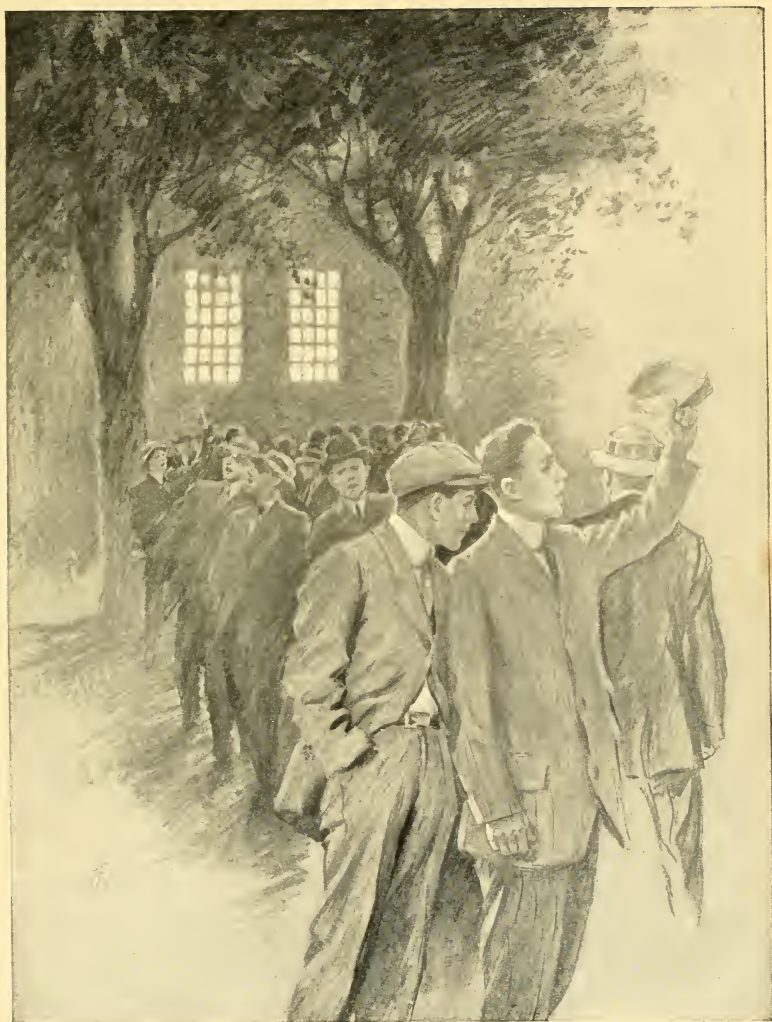
victory all along the line. Some of the less promising members of the Independent second squad were disappointed, since with the advent of the members of Hopkins' team their chances of getting into the Adams game were quite spoiled.

When Duffield arrived on Monday he found his hands full. He was anxious to strengthen his team wherever possible and so spent a good deal of time that might otherwise have been devoted to perfecting the team in trying out various players from Hopkins' team. Hopkins himself was given a try at left guard, but did n't make a showing good enough to warrant his substitution for Koehler. Merrill did well at center in Jelly's place, but he lacked the other boy's accuracy at passing the ball back. In the end the only change made was to give James' place at left tackle to Tom Reid. The Second Team, however, saw numerous changes; and, as Duffield had n't the heart to dismiss any of the candidates at that late hour, a Third Team was formed. The rest of the afternoon's practice was spent in signal work.

That evening the Independent Football Association held its last meeting and, amid great enthusiasm, voted to dissolve. Wellington and

Rob and Pierce and several others made speeches and were cheered to the echo. And afterwards the meeting resolved itself into a parade that made the round of the buildings and sang foot-ball songs.

On Tuesday there was a blackboard talk in the gymnasium before practice, and afterwards Duffield made the fellows a little speech. "Now you fellows realize, of course," he said, "that foot-ball here this season is in a pretty ragged condition. I came up here largely as a favor to Langton to coach his team. Now, at the last moment, I find that I'm expected to take hold and put you fellows in trim to win from Adams. That's a big order. If I had started in at the beginning of the season it would be different, but I didn't. I've never even seen Adams play, and all I know about her team is what I've read in the papers. But here I am, and as I can't get out of it I'll do my best. But you fellows have got to do your best too. There's no two ways to that, I can tell you! You've got to buckle down and do a lot of hard work between now and Thursday, and when Thursday comes you've got to go in and play like the very dickens if you expect to win. I'd like to give you a lay-off to-



"THE MEETING RESOLVED ITSELF INTO A PARADE THAT MADE THE ROUND OF THE BUILDINGS AND SANG FOOT-BALL SONGS."



morrow, but we can't afford it. Not only that, but there will be signal-drill here to-night and to-morrow night at seven o'clock. Don't forget that, please. Every fellow must attend.

“ As near as I can learn, Adams has a rattling good team. She's met with only one defeat this season. She has five of last year's team with her, she has a good coach and she has developed a coaching system that's been working pretty well — as you fellows here at Riverport ought to know. Her line is slightly heavier than ours and it's just as quick. Her back-field is extremely good and we've got nothing on her there. And she's got a quarter who is as good a general as there is on a school team to-day. So team for team it looks like a pretty even thing, with the odds slightly in favor of Adams. Of course on team-play she must be far more advanced than we are, for her men have been playing together for a full month while our team, as it will line up to-day, has never played together. I'm not trying to discourage you. We're pretty well handicapped, I own, but we're not beaten. These plays we've just gone over ought to help. Most of them are either quite new or are new variations of old plays. If you get so you can

put them through right I should n't be surprised to find that they bothered Adams a whole lot. Now it all depends on how you fellows take hold during the next two days. You must work hard and use your brains. I think we can learn a lot of football in two days if we make up our minds to it. Now, then, all out on the run."

Practice went well that day. The cold weather still held and put snap into the players. To his surprise and secret distress Evan found himself on the side-line when the scrimmage began, with Miller in his place. Peeble followed Miller at quarter and still Evan adorned the bench. He got in finally for the last four or five minutes and Duffield smiled at the eager way in which he raced on to the field and pushed Peeble aside.

"I guess," muttered the coach to himself, "I needed to be afraid of over-working him."

In obedience to instructions, Evan began pulling off the new plays, and, although the Second knew them as well as the First, she could n't stop them. In three minutes of actual playing time the First scored the only touchdown of the day, Shaler being slammed through the line for the final three yards.

There was a good forty-five minutes of signal work in the gymnasium that evening, the players walking or trotting through the drill in canvas shoes. On Wednesday there was another long period of outdoor work in the afternoon and again signal-drill at night. At the end Duffield spoke to them.

“ Well, fellows, work is over for this year. You ’ve taken hold, most every one of you, in just the way I hoped you would. You ’ve worked hard and conscientiously and I think you ’ve learned a good deal. Just how much you have learned remains for you to show to-morrow. I can’t call you a wonderful team, for neither you nor I have had time to work wonders, but I think if you ’ll all play the best you know how to-morrow the School won’t be disappointed in you.”

“ I want you to go to bed early to-night and don’t think too much about the game. In the morning, if it ’s a fair day, be out of doors as much as you can, but don’t try to do much walking. Keep quiet. If it ’s stormy get out for a little while and then settle down in your rooms and read or play games. Be careful of your eating, too. Take a good breakfast and go light at dinner. That ’s all, I guess. I ’ll

be on hand early to-morrow in case anything comes up. Good-night and good luck."

Rob called for a cheer for the coach and it was given with a will. Outside a howling mob was waiting to escort them to the meeting in the assembly-hall, and all the way across the yard the cheers and songs challenged the twinkling white stars.

Both Rob and Evan were somewhat silent when, after the meeting had ended in a final burst of enthusiasm and they had retired to their room, they were making ready for bed. "Gee," muttered Evan finally, "I hope I can sleep. I feel as though I had wheels inside me."

"Same here," said Rob. "I wish the game was over with."

"So do I. No I don't, either. I just wish — well, I just wish I was asleep."

"Well, here goes the light, chum. Good-night."

"Good-night," responded Evan dismally.

It was very still. Through the window, from where he lay, Evan could see thousands of bright frosty stars sparkling in the sky. That meant fair weather to-morrow, he told himself, and a dry field. Then his thoughts, in spite of

his utmost endeavors, went to the game, and presently he flopped over in bed and addressed the huddled form of his room-mate, seen dimly through the star-lit gloom:

“ Say, Rob, in that number 13 play does Deering start with you around left end or does he interfere for Shaler? ”

There was no answer.

“ Well, what do you think of that? ” whispered Evan. “ Oh, well, if he can sleep I guess I can. Here goes.”

It did n't seem that he really did sleep, for he was playing foot-ball in thought all night, but the next thing he knew Rob was calling to him and the room was flooded with morning sunlight.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GAME WITH ADAMS

“**C**OME on, Riverport!” called Rob; and, as he led the team on to the field, Northrup, of the seniors, sprang in front of the throng on the upper side of the field and, waving his light blue megaphone adorned with the dark green R, called for “A double cheer for the Team, fellows, and everybody get into it!”

“Rah, rah, Riverport! Rah, rah, Riverport! Rah, rah, Riverport! Rah, rah, Riverport! Rah, rah, Riverport! Team! Team! Team!”

From across the battle field came the long, slow cheer of the rival: “Adams! Adams! Adams! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Adams! Adams! Adams!”

Adams had won the toss and had chosen to receive the kick-off. Riverport lined itself across the turf; Powers at right end, Kasker at right tackle, Devens at right guard, Jell at

center, Koehler at left guard, Reid at left tackle, Brimmer at left end, Kingsford at quarter, Deering at right half, Langton at left half and Shaler at full-back.

“ All ready, Adams? All ready, Riverport? ” called the referee. Hoyt of Adams raised his arm, Rob called “ Ready! ” and the whistle blew.

Away sped the ball, far and high, turning lazily in flight, and off sprang the eager line. An Adams player gathered in the pigskin and started back. Powers sprang upon him and brought him down struggling. Adams lined up quickly and hurled her full-back at Jelly, but Jelly was stiffer than his name indicated and there was small gain. The next play caught Reid napping and the dark blue piled past him for five yards. With three to go Claffin, the Adams quarter, skipped across and sent a forward pass to the left. The Adams left end tipped it with his fingers before he was pushed aside by Powers and finally fell upon it for a good ten yards gain. The dark blue flags waved gleefully along the south side.

Again Adams made her distance, sending her backs into the line for short gains. Plainly Riverport was undergoing a spell of stage-

fright, for the secondary defence failed to back up the forwards as it should. Evan came running in and pounded Rob on the shoulders.

“What ’s the matter with you fellows?” he cried angrily. “Get in there! Stop it right now! Buck up, Rob!” Then he went running up the field again. Adams sent Bull, her star half-back, through between Devens and Kasker, but Deering and Rob pulled him down before he was free of the line. “That ’s the stuff!” yelled Evan gleefully, “Nail ’em, Rob!” Adams tried another play at Jell and again failed to move that youth out of his tracks. Their left tackle fell back to punt and Deering joined Evan up the field. The punt was high and long. “Mine!” called Deering. “Yours,” responded Evan, cutting across in front of a charging Adams end, “To the right!” He threw himself in front of the enemy and as they both went rolling over Deering cleared them and started across the field. One, two, three white lines passed under his flying feet and then he was in the midst of the enemy. He squirmed free once, but the next instant he was smothered on his thirty-three yards.

“Our ball!” called Evan, running up. “Get

up, get up! Kick-formation! 12 — 14 — 36 — 58! ” He glanced back to see that Deering was ready. “ 7 — 8 — ”

Back sped the ball to Deering and that youth took one step forward and booted the oval far down the field. Away raced friend and foe, but Brimmer, Riverport's left end, out-distanced all and was waiting when the ball settled into the arms of the Adams left half. Down they went together on Adams' forty yards. From there Adams worked the ball down to her opponent's forty-five yards. Most of the gains were made between Koehler and Reid or outside the latter. Adams played fast, putting the ball into play almost before Riverport could get into position. Time and again it was the back-field that stopped the runner when he was well through the line. On the forty-five yards Adams was caught holding and was set back fifteen yards. A quarter-back run was tried with no success and again the ball was punted toward Riverport's goal. Evan took it this time and managed to make a dozen yards along the side-line before he was pushed out. Again kick-formation was called for and again Deering punted a good forty-five yards. Adams' quarter missed the catch but got the ball on the

bound before Powers threw himself fiercely upon him.

“ Now then, let ’s take it away from them! ” cried Rob. “ Get down there, Reid! Play low, every one! Spoil this! Pile them up! ”

With the ball near her thirty yards Adams drew a tackle out of the line and sent a tandem at Devens with fair success. But a similar play on the other side of center was spoiled by Jelly, who threw himself in front of the interference and piled up the play. With six yards to go Adams tried an on-side kick but failed to recover it and the ball was Riverport’s on her adversary’s fifty yards.

“ All right! ” cried Evan briskly. “ Left formation. 27 — 38 — 14 — 68! 27 — 38 — 14 — 68 — 7 — ”

Back came the ball from Jelly, Evan turned and thrust it against Shaler’s stomach and that youth, with Deering and Rob behind, went through Adams’ left guard for six yards. Riverport flags waved and Riverport voices cheered lustily.

“ Kick-formation! ” called Evan, and Deering dropped back and stretched his hands out for the ball. But the play was a “ skin-tackle ” on the left and Rob got four yards and first

down. But the Adams line stiffened then and the next attempt was a failure, and so Deering punted toward the corner of the field. This time the quarter made a fine running catch and, eluding Brimmer, got over two white lines before Kasker reached him and pulled him down. Adams lined up almost on her fifteen yards and, after one try at Reid which gave her a scant two yards, punted out of danger. Deering fumbled and finally fell on the bobbing pigskin on his forty yard-line, with half the Adams team on top of him. Time was called while he fought for his breath, and on the side-line Hinkley slipped off his sweater. But Deering was as good as new at the end of two minutes. Evan sent Rob outside of left tackle for three yards and Shaler between right guard and center for two. Then Deering punted once more and the Adams quarter ran back to his thirty-eight yards before he was downed.

A forward pass netted eight yards for the Dark Blue and then Clafin got away around Powers' end for ten more. Plunges at the line gave them another first down and the ball was in Riverport's territory again. The forward pass was tried, but the ball struck the ground and Adams was penalized fifteen yards. A punt

followed and Deering caught the ball on the run and reeled off twenty yards through a close field before he was caught. Evan hammered the center of the Adams line for scant gains and then called Deering to the rescue. This time there was a hole in the Riverport line and a big tackle rushed through in time to divert the ball as it arose from Deering's foot. The kick went short and a wild scramble ensued, an Adams guard finally falling on the pigskin. For the rest of the half neither team succeeded in making a first down and the ball was in the air most of the time, Deering gaining at least five yards on each exchange of punts. The period ended with the ball on Riverport's thirty yards in Riverport's possession.

There was fifteen minutes of cheering and singing, and then the teams came trotting back again. It was seen that Duffield had made one change in his line, Hopkins replacing Koehler at left guard. It was Adams' kick-off and Rob made a clear fifteen yards before he was tackled. Again, much to the distaste of the Riverport supporters, Deering kicked on first down. That gave Adams the ball well inside her forty yards. She tried the mettle of Hopkins on the first play and didn't like the result. It was

evident at once that that side of the line had been much strengthened, for Hopkins and Reid had played side by side all season and knew just how to help each other. A fake quarter-back run, with the ball going to left-half for a plunge through the line, gave Adams a few yards, and then she was forced to punt. The ball went out of bounds at Riverport's forty yard-line. Evan called his signals while the pigskin was being taken in and almost before Adams had lined up Jelly had passed and Shaler was squirming through between right guard and tackle. He shook off two tacklers and then, with half the Riverport team hauling and pushing, kept his feet long enough to carry the ball a good twelve yards. Riverport went crazy with delight along the side-line. Shaler was given the ball again and this time made four yards before he was stopped. A scant yard by Rob outside of left tackle left five yards to go. Deering dropped back, Jelly passed well and the right half ran out to the left and then threw across to Powers for twenty yards. It was a beautiful forward pass and took the ball to Adams' thirty-five yards. Deering and Shaler each made three through the line and Shaler was called on to make the rest of the distance, which he did on

a split-play that fooled Adams nicely. With the ball less than twenty-five yards from the goal-line and directly in front of the posts Deering tried a drop-kick which missed by a few feet only.

Adams put the ball into play from scrimmage and found a weak spot on the right of Riverport's line, where Kasker was feeling the pace. Two tries through him netted eight yards and a tandem on center gave three more. In the last play the Adams full-back was hurt and Duffield seized the occasion to take out Kasker and put in Ward. Adams replaced the injured full-back with a fresh player and the game went on. The ball changed hands frequently now and Deering's punts were growing shorter. But so were those of Spring, the Adams kicker, and observing this, Adams' coach took out his right half and put in a new man who thereafter did most of the punting and was able to out-kick Deering some five yards. Duffield responded by replacing Deering with Hinkley. Once Adams worked the ball down to Riverport's thirty-three yards and tried a forward pass to the corner of the field. But Brimmer shouldered the opposing end away and captured the pigskin. The time was growing short

and it was evident that if Riverport was to score she must get busy. In a punting battle Hinkley could not be relied on to gain ground. Evan did some tall thinking about then. While Riverport had shown herself able to make good gains through the Adams line on occasions, she was unable to make ground consistently in that way. Evan drew Rob aside and they whispered a moment. Then,

“ Kick-formation! ” called Evan.

The ball did n't reach Hinkley, however. It went to Evan and from him to Rob, and the latter, with the rest of the backs interfering, skirted the Adams left end on a wide run. Ten yards, fifteen — then Rob was alone, his interference having been bowled over, with the enemy grabbing at him and diving for his long legs. Twice he was almost down and twice he was up again, staggering, whirling, dodging on along the side-line. And then the Adams left guard and captain wrapped his arms around Rob's legs and Rob came to earth, and half a dozen blue-stockinged warriors thumped themselves upon him.

When the pile disentangled itself Rob rolled over on his back but did n't seem interested in getting up. At the end of two minutes he was

being helped to the side-line, looking very white and dizzy, and Hover was running out to take his place. Hover was fresh and eager and had weight and fight. On the first play Shaler shot along the side-line for four yards before he was forced out. Then the ball was carried in and Hover was given his chance. Straight through center he plowed for eight yards, fighting and plunging, and it was first down. Back went Hinkley and, while the onlookers debated whether it was really to be a kick, the ball went into his hands and, with good interference, he ran the left end for ten yards. On the side-lines Riverport was cheering madly, exultantly, Adams madly and imploringly. But it seemed that at last the Light Blue had found herself, for Hover and Shaler made gain after gain through the weakening center and Evan tore off a short end run that at last placed the ball on Adams' thirty-two yards.

"Kick-formation!" cried Evan hoarsely.
"How much time is there, sir?"

"A little over five minutes," answered the field judge.

"Lots of time, fellows! Kick-formation! Every one into this now! 44 — 54 — 69 — 18 — "

“ Signal! ” cried Hover anxiously.

“ 44 — 54 — 69 — 18 — 24! Got it? ”

“ Yes,” was the answer as Hover dug his toes into the turf.

“ 9 — 7 — 8 — ”

Forward plunged the backs, Evan shot the ball at Shaler, Jelly and Devens opened the whole and the play slammed through for three yards. The same play with Hover carrying the pigskin gave three more. But Adams was desperate now, almost under the shadow of her goal, and Evan knew that a line attack would not give him the rest of the distance. He debated whether to try again for a field-goal. If Hinkley made it it would probably give them the game, but Hinkley could n't be depended on like Deering. A forward pass the enemy would be looking for, and the chances of bringing it off successfully were slim. An end run seemed the only thing unless —!

“ I 'll try it! ” he told himself.

“ Kick-formation! ” he called. “ 24 — 87 — 17 — 41 — ”

Back came the ball to him and with the two halves speeding ahead as interference he shot toward the right end of the line as though for a quarter-back run. Adams started to head

him off. But when he had gone some five paces Evan slowed down and, swinging around, dropped the ball from his hands and kicked it obliquely across the field.

“ Left! ” he cried. “ Left! ”

There was no one near the ball when it came down save Brimmer, and Brimmer let it settle into his arms and started on his ten yard journey to the goal-line. Adams had been caught napping, but her quarter had not gained his reputation for nothing. He reached Brimmer three yards from that last fatal white line and bore him backwards.

“ First down! ” called the referee.

“ Line up, fellows! ” shrieked Evan. “ Get a move on! Lower, you right tackle. Now make this go, fellows. Put it over! Devens back! ” Gus fell from his place and formed into the tandem. “ 73 — 34 — 24 — 14 — 8 — 6 — ”

Straight at the center of the enemy charged the tandem, Hover snuggling the ball to his stomach and grunting like an enraged bull as the lines met. Forward he went; some one went down before him and seized one knee; he struggled on grimly, dragging the enemy with him; for a moment he was stopped; then something

gave in front and he went falling, staggering over the line for the touchdown amid the wild shouts of Riverport.

It was all over shortly after Hinkley had kicked goal, and the team was borne off the field on the shoulders of as joyously mad a throng of fellows as ever yelled themselves hoarse over a victory.

Four hours later Evan slipped out of the dining-room into the arms of a waiting crowd that filled the corridor from side to side.

“ Who ’s elected, Kingsford? ” they cried as they surrounded him.

“ Hopkins proposed Rob,” he cried, “ and — ”

“ Good stuff! ”

“ Bully for Hop! ”

“ But Rob refused because he was a junior.”

“ Refused! Then who — ”

“ Gus Devens! Rob proposed him and it went with a roar! Gus is captain. Let ’s give him a cheer when he comes out. There he is. Now then, fellows! All together! ”

And as the doors opened wide and the victorious players came out they were greeted

with a roar that shook the windows of Second House and went rolling out into the night to apprise the few absent ones that Riverport had elected her football captain for next year.

THE END.

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